

**CRUST PUNK: APOCALYPTIC RHETORIC AND DYSTOPIAN
PERFORMATIVES**

A Thesis

by

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ABSTRACT

The main focus of this thesis is to understand the myriad ways in which crust punk as an expressive cultural form creates meaning, forms the basis for social formation (or music scene), and informs the ways in which its participants both interact with and understand the world around them. Fieldwork for this research was conducted during the summer of 2012 in Austin, Texas. Primary methodology included participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and online ethnography. Additional research data was collected over the last five years through my own personal involvement with the crust punk music scene.

The first section examines the ways in which crust punk as a genre both continues to evolve by avoiding and disavowing genre definitions and boundaries. The second section addresses my particular experiences with the Austin, Texas crust punk scene. I separate and examine the differences within the scene among and between differing levels of participation in various scene practices. These practices include the everyday practices necessary to maintain the music scene, as well as “anarchist” practices such as squatting, train hopping, transiency, and refusal to work.

In the final section, I argue that in the crust punk scene dystopian performatives enable an apocalyptic and dystopic view of the world, building upon Jill Dolan’s theory of utopian performatives. I also outline my theory on how dystopian performatives and apocalyptic rhetoric work together to inflect crust punk structures of feelings and social imaginaries.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my father. His encouragement to always pursue my dreams has been a constant source of strength. He is gone, but not forgotten.

This thesis is also dedicated to all the crusties and crust punks keeping the scene alive, riding the rails, and living life to the fullest. Have fun and be safe.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITION OF TERMS

Crust punk is more than just a genre of hardcore punk music; it is a sonic descriptor, an indicator, an identity, enactment, embodiment and socio-cultural critique. Musically it is performance marked by raw, dark, apocalyptic, morose and morbid visual and aural aesthetics, combining down-tuned, extremely distorted electric guitar(s), heavy, often distorted electric bass, and varying rhythmic and vocal techniques from parent genres. More importantly, crust punk is the people, the people that create, perform and embody specific ideologies, musical practices and culture ways. Commonly they align themselves with anarchist thought, anti-religion, anti-capitalism, vegetarianism (or veganism), animal rights, environmentalism, feminism, both local and global political, as well as economic protest and human rights movements. As a result, their music and subculture have been marginalized, pushing them “underground.” Many of the descriptions of crust punk and “crusties” encapsulate the arrogant misperception of the mainstream dominant culture, similarly labeling them “gutter punks,” “drunk punks,” or “dirty hippies.” The perceptions of crust punk culture as involving drinking, drug abuse, homelessness, transiency, squatting, and generally “dropping-out” of mainstream society have resulted in studies that only focus on the “classic” self-destructive punk attitude and style.

When I started this research my goal was to interrogate the relationship between crust punk music and activist behaviors associated with the subculture. This project represents an inroad into understanding the motivations for activist performances in crust

punk. I believe that creating this basis is a crucial step in contributing knowledge to an otherwise non-existent site of study. There has been little or no research or writing done about crust punk either in academia or in popular media. This paper is the starting point, hopefully opening the door and exposing a variety of opportunities for further research. For my purposes, it lays the groundwork for every inquiry to follow. While it is not comprehensive by any means, it does seek to add to the understanding of crust punk as a genre, as expressive culture, as identity, and most importantly as performance. The main focus of this project will be to understand the myriad ways in which crust punk as an expressive cultural form creates meaning, forms the basis for social formation (or music scene), and informs the ways in which its participants both interact with and understand the world around them.

I would like to begin by giving my definitions of key terms in the discourse of crust punk. The two most important of these terms are “crust punk” and “crusty.” There is a complex relationship between these two expressions. They are often used interchangeably, for my purposes, however, I will position crust punks and crusties as differentiated by the involvement (or lack thereof) with crust punk music. At first glance one could put these two terms, crust punk and/or crusty, at opposite ends of a hypothetical spectrum. Instead, I would like to view them as multiple representations, or manifestations, of crust culture — not only crust punk — not simply crusty people, but the diverse range of crust elements assumed by the music of crust punk, the rhetoric and ethos of crust writ large, the iconography of crust punk culture, and the various divergent satellites associated with crust punk. That relationship will be examined thoroughly in

Chapter three, for now it is simply my intent to create a basis for understanding these distinctions.

The term crusty has been around longer than crust punk. “Crusty” is typically used derogatively to describe a filthy, smelly, homeless person. A modern manifestation of this can be seen in the population of squatters, hobos, homeless, and new age travelers that are often simply labeled crust punks. An example of this can be seen online at the *crustypunks* blog (<http://crustypunks.blogspot.com/>), in which a variety of people are labeled crust punks and assumed to be an urban tribe simply because they live in the open of Tompkins Square Park, New York City. This is evidenced in the blog’s right-hand margin, typically used for supplementary material, in which the author has defined his parameters of crust punk, as well as his interpretation of the crust punk community due to his encounters at a single location. The blog’s author, Stephen Hirsch, uses a definition of crust/crust punk taken from the Wikipedia site as follows:

“Crusties is a term for members of one type of subculture. The term predates crust punk and can be used independently to refer to a type of street punks or a form of contemporary squatters. Members are noted for their unkempt outward appearance and are associated with road protests, squatting, raves, begging, train hopping, street entertaining (or busking) and the young homeless. The term may now be more notable for its associations to crust punk.”

While all the people photographed and “interviewed” for the blog fit the description of “crusty,” they are not necessarily crust punks. This is an important fact to remember when interrogating the discourses surrounding crust punk: a crust punk is a crusty punk

rocker, but a person who is identified as crusty is *not* necessarily a punk in the ideological, ethical, or musical sense of the word. Much as “punk music” was a combination of the terms punk and rock, as in rock music made by punks, so too crust punk evolved from the term “crust,” or “crusty,” that is, punk music made by crusty people. For my purposes I will use the term “crusty” to refer to all those people who fit the description above whether or not they identify or associate with crust punk. I will examine more fully the complex relationship between crusties, or crustiness, and crust punk in Chapter three, showing that they are not mutually exclusive, but rather collectively exhaustive.

The term “crust punk” will be used to refer to a specific subgenre of hardcore punk with extreme metal influence, historically rooted in anarcho and hardcore punk from the United Kingdom. Extreme metal is itself a complex and wide-ranging phenomenon. “It consists 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” (Kahn-Harris 2007, 7). Similarly, hardcore punk, a term used to differentiate between new wave and “authentic” punk, has distinct histories and trajectories developed in unique contexts around the globe (Blush 2001; Glasper 2004, 2006, 2009; Peterson 2009; Roby 2010; Waksman 2009). Chapter two will further develop and examine the history and the codification of generic expressive resources, as well as the “constantly developing and reconfiguring” of crust punk. Like “extreme metal,” crust punk can be thought of as an umbrella term,

capturing all those expressive resources and styles that culminate in a global scene (Kahn-Harris 2007; Berger et al 2011).

Crust punk as a musical subgenre can be sub-subdivided even further into what is known as “crustcore” and “crusty hardcore,” however, for my purposes I will only be using the distinction “crust punk” when discussing the scene and the music around which it revolves (Von Havoc 1984). While it will be useful to enter into dialog with discourses surrounding the sub-subdivision of crust punk into minute categories, I will only use those terms to discuss the development and complexity within crust punk writ large. Chapter two will advance that discussion exploring, not only the historical development, but also the more recent trends in crust punk. Other terms are often used or exchanged for “crust punk” in everyday discourse. Those terms are “stenchcore,” “gutter punk,” “drunk punk,” and occasionally “street punk.” The latter term is “misused,” typically by those outside the scene, to refer to what I would otherwise qualify as crust punk. This can be seen in the instance of Indonesian “street punks” being detained by their government and forced to conform to culturally appropriate expressive styles (Winn and Ijazah 2012). Street punk is its own phenomenon and musical genre, distinct from, yet still related to crust punk on a purely esoteric “punk” level. “Gutter punk” or “drunk punk” have become terms for a person, rather than a musical genre identifier, that are almost interchangeable with the term crusty. Both gutter punks and crusties, or crust punks, are associated with willful unemployment, unkempt appearances, panhandling, street performances, and punk subculture (Wikipedia 2013b). I will use the term “crust punk” to denote those people that participate in the music scene and may not

participate in squatting, willful unemployment, and/or transiency. Those people that do participate in those behaviors as well as associate with the crust punk music scene I call crusty crust punks. The differences and similarities between the two will be examined further in Chapter three.

The source of all of the information for this paper comes from the Internet, the ethnographic data I collected in Austin, Texas during the summer of 2012, as well as my personal collection of crust punk albums and publications. The Internet is my primary source of information; various personal blogs and band websites, specifically the Myspace, Facebook, and Bandcamp pages of the bands discussed herein, as well as a multitude of crust punk LPs, EPs, compilations and documentaries. In addition, Wikipedia has proven an invaluable vernacular source to my introduction to and understanding of crust punk and crusty culture, offering as close to an ethnographic consensus as I have yet to find anywhere else. For my purposes I will be treating Wikipedia as a supplementary vernacular source for an otherwise poorly documented genre history. The concept of the web as vernacular is not a new one, Robert Glenn Howard points to the vernacularity of web content as that, which “can only be seen as distinct from the mass, the official, and the institutional” (Howard 2008). Wikipedia is perhaps the best example of a vernacular web source; it consists solely of user-generated content and, with but a few exceptions, is monitored by unofficial, “everyday” folks. Similarly, the personal blogs and band websites are vernacularly conceived along with the material culture of LPs, EPs, and compact discs that form the “everyday” for crust punks. The brief time I spent in Austin, Texas also helped to illuminate the complexities

in defining crust punk, not only as a genre of music, but also as identity, and social formation.

CHAPTER II

CONTEXTUALIZING CRUST PUNK

As with any genre of music, discussing origins can be a tricky endeavor. Crust punk is no exception. This chapter will discuss the establishment of crust punk expressive resources, including musical and lyrical content, iconography, and fashion. In order to do so it is necessary to briefly discuss crust punk's roots based in punk and heavy metal more generally. Dick Hebdige traces the origins of punk to the "apocalyptic summer" of 1976 in London, Britain (1979, 25). He saw punk style as bringing together disparate elements such as glitter-rock, American proto-punk, 60's "mod" fashion, R&B, northern soul, and reggae (1979). It has become fairly common knowledge that the Sex Pistols were the first "punk" band. Many other bands have followed in their footsteps, and today that "original" punk style is still very much a part of popular culture around the world.

Several important events happened in punk subculture leading up to the emergence of crust punk. First, punk quickly became incorporated into the "mainstream" by way of what was called "new wave," a slicker, more palatable version of punk aimed at marketability (Peterson 2009; Roby 2010). Second, the incorporation of punk into pop culture lead to a backlash of punks attempting to reclaim ideological authenticity resulting in the creation of what is now commonly referred to as "hardcore punk." Hardcore punk, sometimes shortened to simply "hardcore," emerged in the United States and United Kingdom between the years 1979 to 1982 (Peterson 2009; Roby 2010; Waksman 2009). Hardcore punks sought to differentiate themselves not only from new

wave but also of the nihilistic, glamorous, self-destructive punk of the Sex Pistols (Blush 2001; Roby 2010; Peterson 2009; Waksman 2009). “Punk gave lip-service to ‘Do It Yourself’ (D.I.Y.) and democratization of the Rock scene, but Hardcore transcended all commercial and corporate concerns” (Blush 2001, 275). D.I.Y. became an important aspect of hardcore punk; it became the dominant ideology of not only fashion and style (Hebdige 1979), but the means of production and distribution (Blush 2001; Duncombe 1997; Thompson 2004; Waksman 2009). The difficulty in discussing hardcore punk lies in the multitude of local scenes around which it initially arose. Early hardcore bands could be differentiated based on their unique locale, such as East Coast versus West Coast bands in the United States, and refined even smaller to the cities hailed as origins for many bands both American and British (Blush 2001; Glasper 2004, 2006, 2009; O’Connor 2002; Peterson 2009; Roby 2010; Waksman 2009).

The discrepancy between American and “U.K.” hardcore are important to note for this discussion. The difference between the two is a matter of political ideology, while bands from both sides of the Atlantic were overtly political in their lyrical and iconographic statements; U.K. hardcore bands were aligned with what is known as *anarcho-punk*. American hardcore bands most closely associated with anarchist politics were Black Flag, Dead Kennedys, and Minor Threat (Gosling 2004). This is in contrast to UK hardcore bands considered anarcho-punk, such as Crass, Flux of Pink Indians, and the Subhumans (2004), but also Discharge, the Varukers, Disorder, and Chaos UK (Von Havoc 1984). “The selection of the British examples, with the exception of Crass, is a little trickier than the U.S. examples, as a number of U.K. bands from this period can be

seen to have a similar profile” (Gosling, 169). Crust punk began in Britain, and it was from the anarcho-punk scene that bands took their inspiration, so much so that many of the bands considered the first wave, or proto-crust, are equally associated with U.K. hardcore, anarcho-punk and/or crust punk.

Equally influential to crust punk musical style is the inclusion of heavy metal. Between the years 1977-85 punk and heavy metal sounds began to merge together into what is called “crossover” (Waksman 2009). The crossover sound, that is, heavy metal mixed with punk, actually begins with the band Motörhead, specifically their release *Overkill* in 1977 (2009). Heavy metal comes from a much different background than early punk; heavy metal has its roots in the blues, specifically the blues-rock, and progressive rock of the 1960s and 70s (2009). Steve Waksman in *This Ain't the Summer of Love: Conflict and Crossover in Heavy Metal and Punk* (2009) points to four key features of Motörhead that lend them a “punk credibility” of sorts: (1) the band members, bassist/vocalist Lemmy Kilmister in particular, formed the image of the band around the outlaw biker aesthetic; no frills and street tough, as opposed to the glitz and glam of heavy rock at the time. This is especially important for associations with hardcore punk that eschewed the overly glamorous fashion oriented style espoused by early punk. Hardcore punk favored an orientation based on the ordinary, jeans and t-shirts, instead of Mohawks and fishnets (Blush 2001; Roby 2010; Peterson 2009; Waksman 2009). (2) The band was met with poor reviews and little support by major record labels, necessitating the release of albums through independent record companies. (3) The band name itself has ties to the working class, “motorhead” being slang for a

speed freak, or amphetamine addict, it was “essentially [a] *proletarian* drug” (Parsons and Burchill 1978 in Waksman 2009). (4) Most importantly it was Motörhead’s signature sound, which drew a “mixed audience” of punks and rockers through “their aggressive use of noise, in the form of volume and distortion, the effects of which were heightened by the fast tempos at which the band played” (Waksman 2009).

Although Motörhead planted the seeds for metal/punk crossover as early as 1977, it would take the second wave of punk in Britain, or U.K. hardcore, to begin to show signs of incorporating heavy metal expressive resources into their sound and style. The same trend was happening in the U.S. at the same time with drastically different results. By this point in time, heavy metal had already begun to splinter into multiple subgenres; the most significant of these developments was what became known as thrash metal. Thrash metal itself was a result of the blending of hardcore punk speed and ferocity with the heavy metal sounds originating in Britain marked by the sound of bands such as Black Sabbath, Motörhead, Diamond Head, Saxon, Iron Maiden, and Venom. Thrash metal bands such as Metallica, Slayer, Megadeth, Exodus, and Anthrax essentially created a new sound, modeled on the crossover sound of British heavy metal and American hardcore punk (Weinstein 2000). The flow of punk across the Atlantic was not as influential, for the most part American hardcore developed relatively autonomously from U.K. hardcore, more specifically British anarcho-punk (Glasper 2004, 2006, 2009). Similarly, burgeoning thrash metal bands had more impact in their American context than on the punk scene in England until the mid-80s. By that point in history American hardcore bands, such as D.R.I. (or Dirty Rotten Imbeciles), Cro-mags, Agnostic Front,

and Suicidal Tendencies had begun incorporating more heavy metal aesthetics into their music, creating what is now known as “crossover thrash.”

In the U.K., hardcore punk bands were doing the same thing as their American counterparts, however, with a different set of expressive resources. Bands such as Amebix and Antisept were blending together the sound and rhetoric of anarcho-punk bands such as Crass, Flux of Pink Indians, Discharge, and the Varukers with the (British) heavy metal sound of Motörhead and Venom (Glasper 2004, 2006, 2009; Von Havoc 1984; Wikipedia 2013a). Despite their sonic differences, the two bands that are most often cited as the originators of crust punk are Amebix and Antisept (Von Havoc 1984; Wikipedia 2013b).

Arise! Out from the Void

Amebix are the exception that proves the rule. They are widely considered the godfathers of crust punk, just as Black Sabbath are considered by many to be the first “heavy metal” band. The problem lies in the fact that Amebix did not consider themselves crust punks. In fact, even though they came out of the anarcho-punk scene in Britain in the early to mid 1980s, they did not consider themselves anarcho-punks either (Glasper 2006). Amebix were definitely punk, they admit to not even being able to play their instruments when brothers Rob and Chris Miller, aka the Baron and Stig, first formed the band initially called The Band with No Name in 1978 (Glasper 2006). Unlike other U.K. hardcore punk bands in the scene at the time Amebix were different, taking inspiration more from post-punk bands like Killing Joke, Joy Division, and Bauhaus (Pavel 2012) along with British heavy metal like Motörhead and Black Sabbath (Glasper

2006; Pavel 2012). The combination of “dark” hardcore influenced by the apocalyptic imagery and lyrical content of post-punks bands, combined with the punk approach to making music, along with the raw power of metal performed by Motörhead defines Amebix, and has created a template of sorts for nearly every crust punk band to follow.

Amebix are exceptional precisely because they never sought to make anything other than their own art. The fact that they are now pigeonholed into being the godfathers of crust punk is both a blessing and a curse. As Rob “the Baron” Miller points out in an interview, Amebix, and many of the bands coming out of the same scene at the same time, simply did what they did, played the music they wanted to play, sang about topics that interested them without regard to larger political implications, essentially living lives the way they wanted to live; it would take a few years of removal and distance before the meanings attributed to the band, the sound, the lyrics, and the iconography would come to stand-in for what is considered the Amebix model, the basis for crust punk (Rob Miller interviewed by Pavel 2012). The layers of meaning the crust punk community has sedimented upon Amebix has created a fixed conception of what, not only the band is but also, what crust punk can and should be. So much so to the point that the bands most recent release, *Sonic Mass* (2011), was met with mixed reception, with many fans decrying the release as “not what they expected” or that it “doesn’t sound like Amebix” on a plethora of online forums, blogs, and music websites (give direct examples, or include citations?). The irony is that *Sonic Mass* (2011) is precisely the type of album, the sound, the music, and the production value that Amebix would have created in the mid 1980s, if they had had the technical and musical proficiency.

Arise! (1985) is held as the epitome of crust punk, particularly Amebix brand crust punk. It is the specific blend of dark, apocalyptic imagery in the lyrics and iconography, the distorted guitar sound, the mid-range heavy thumping bass, Rob's grizzly vocal delivery, the muddled production value, that create an icon of crust punk sound. As many artists, journalists, and fans have pointed out, it was "metal played by punks" (multiple sources). *Monolith* (1987), the band's only other LP, released a mere two years after *Arise!*, is hailed as a monument to crust punk sound by many, but also viewed as "too metal" in its production (Von Havoc 1984). Perhaps this is the reason for *Sonic Mass*'s poor reception, is that it is "too metal," "too post-punk," essentially "too varied" to fit the requisite for what is currently considered crust punk. After all, Amebix had disbanded for over twenty years after a brief tour in support of *Monolith* (1987) before reuniting and recording *Sonic Mass* (2011). Even more, the band never toured the United States or Canada until after the release of *Sonic Mass* (2011), perhaps adding to the mystique and aura of the masters of crust punk.

Antisect is perhaps the best band to contrast Amebix, since the two are often cited in tandem as being crucial to the establishment of crust punk sound. Antisect initially played in a much more straight-ahead punk style, specifically the anarcho-punk style of U.K. hardcore as codified by bands such as Discharge, the Varukers, UK Subs, all by way of the anarchist politics of earlier anarcho-punk bands like Crass and Flux of Pink Indians. In fact, their first album *In Darkness There Is No Choice* (1983) was released by Flux of Pink Indians' independent record label Spiderleg Records. That first album is still considered an anarcho-punk mainstay, but the sound is much closer to a

grittier, more distorted version of anarcho-punk made popular by the band Discharge. It is actually on their second release, the two-song EP *Out from the Void* (1985) that Antisect set themselves apart from the U.K. hardcore scene by mixing anarcho-punk with metal influence. The differences between the two albums is significant, while the distorted guitar sound did not change, the guitar playing changed from the three-chord punk to chugging metal riffs. Along with the change in guitar technique both the drums and the vocals took on a more metal quality, the drums switching from the syncopated beat codified by Discharge to a straight snare/bass metal style of playing. The vocals also took on a growled, gruffer, performance, as opposed to the slack-jawed, snotty, snarl of stereotypical punk delivery.

Unlike Amebix, Antisect exhibit no influences other than heavy metal and anarcho-punk, and although the lyrical content reflects the bleakness common in U.K. hardcore, there is no trace of the “dark” hardcore or post-punk apocalyptic imagery. Antisect instead relies on what had become fairly typical war (anti-war) imagery and “us against them” themes that had become well established in anarcho-punk. Musically, however, *Out from the Void* (1985) is undeniably crust punk in its approach, “metal played by punks,” poor production value, dirty, gritty, overly distorted guitar, and a grizzly, semi-growled vocal delivery. Two bands, two albums, Amebix *Arise!* (1985) and Antisect *Out from the Void* (1985) would set the tone for crust punk, inspiring countless bands in their wake. Although both bands were relatively short lived (Amebix 1978-1987; Antisect 1982-1987) two other bands that came out of the same U.K.

hardcore scene would follow on their coattails, Hellbastard and Deviated Instinct, solidifying crust punk sound, style, rhetoric, and iconography.

Rippercrust Stenchcore

The first time the term “crust” was used in print associated with the crossover sound of U.K. hardcore and heavy metal was Hellbastard’s 1986 demo *Rippercrust*. The band took inspiration from Amebix, Antisect and Discharge as well as the heavy metal of Hellhammer and Venom, combining that sound with the lyrics and politics of anarcho-punk scene bands like Crass, Rudimentary Peni, and Flux of Pink Indians (Glasper 2009). “Hellbastard were always punks playing metal, as opposed to metalheads playing punk” (Scruff interviewed in Glasper 2009, 183). Similarly, the band Deviated Instinct released their 1986 demo entitled *Terminal Filth Stenchcore*. Stenchcore referenced the U.K. hard-“core” punk scene they were a part of, while terminal, filth, and stench referred to the bands bleak, morbid, and dirty sound and often smelly style. Deviated Instinct were inspired by many of the same bands that Hellbastard mention such as Venom, Motörhead, Hellhammer, as well as Amebix and Antisect (2009). Like Hellbastard and many bands at the time, Deviated Instinct were directly aligned with the anarcho-punk scene, so instead focused on the heavy metal influence in their music. As Leggo, the vocalist for the band puts it, “metal *was* a big influence, we loved the music, but hated all the rather childish Satanic, cock-rock ideas that came with it...” (2009, 286).

Hellbastard’s vocalist/guitarist Scruff says, “A lot of people say we started the crust-punk genre, but whatever...if they want to say that, I don’t mind, but I’m certainly

no Malcolm McLaren, claiming I invented something I didn't. We all knew something was up though when *Smash Hits* [a teen pop music magazine] had this free sticker booklet with it one week, and one of the stickers said, 'No Crusties Allowed!'" (Scruff interviewed in Glasper 2009). Crust, or crusties, was already a formulation in British popular culture by the mid 1980s, what makes this significant is that crustiness became synonymous with dirty, unwashed punks, particularly the punks that were part of the squat movement in Britain (as well as the rest of Europe and the U.S.) at the time. Part of what made Amebix "retroactively" crust punk before there was a name for it was the fact that they spent a majority of the life of the band squatting in Bristol, England. Likewise, as part of the anarcho-punk scene, Antisept spent time squatting in various locations in Britain, as well as while touring Western Europe. Part of Deviated Instinct's style, which they called "stenchcore" centered on the fact that the band was formed when two members moved from one squat into another, connecting with Leggo, who would become the band's vocalist.

The burgeoning crust punk style was a result of the squatter lifestyle coupled with the biker, street tough, aesthetic performed by Motörhead as part of their "not quite punk," "not quite metal" image. Equally informed by existing U.K. hardcore punk style, the biker look of bands like Motörhead and Venom, as well as inherently shaped by the squatter lifestyle, crust punk style was born. It is important to note that elements of this style were features of Amebix and Antisept. Amebix in particular had a unique metal/punk crossover look that defied trends in U.K. hardcore, while referencing Sex Pistol era punk and the Motörhead biker image. Antisept on the other hand are often seen

as bringing to the fore the all black dress-code introduced as an ideological statement by anarcho-punk band Crass.

Just as the fashion and iconography of crust punk was being codified so too was the sound. Deviated Instinct and Hellbastard both have the overly distorted guitar, bass-heavy, wall of sound and noise utilized by Motörhead and Venom along with dense textures and atmosphere of Amebix. They both also play in a very heavy metal style, with palm-muted, chugging guitar riffs, and heavy metal drum patterns reminiscent of Antisept's *Out from the Void* (1985) EP. Both bands also feature the gruff, growled vocal delivery, however, Deviated Instinct's earlier releases featured two vocalists, Leggo (vocals) and Mid (guitar/vocals), with Mid offering a snarling snotty mid-range punk counterpoint to Leggo's low pitched roar.

Meanwhile... Across the Pond

By the early to mid-1980s heavy metal's landscape was undergoing drastic changes, mostly in the United States. American bands, such as Metallica, Slayer, Exodus, Anthrax, and Megadeth, were combining the sounds of New Wave of British Heavy Metal (NWOBHM) bands with American hardcore punk speed and ferocity. While many of the NWOBHM bands that inspired American heavy metal in the 1980s were already influenced by British punk and hardcore, their American progeny would further the punk influence, in turn creating what is now known as "thrash metal." Thrash began as a signifier of both metal and hardcore bands' sound. The term itself has many sub-sub-genres associated with it, for instance, there is thrashcore, and crossover thrash both associated with hardcore punk, and of course thrash metal. The main determinant in

all of these sub-genres of thrash is speed. Bands like Metallica and Slayer pushed the envelope of heavy metal speed, citing hardcore bands as influencing their sound, and even recording cover versions of their favorite hardcore songs. In the midst of this milieu many hardcore and metal bands in America were essentially doing the same as their British counterparts, blending existing hardcore punk and heavy metal expressive resources to create something new. For example, the band Dirty Rotten Imbeciles (or D.R.I.) started as a hardcore punk band, later incorporating metal-like guitar riffs and drum patterns. Bands like D.R.I., Cryptic Slaughter, Cro-mags, Suicidal Tendencies, and Stormtroopers of Death (aka S.O.D.), combined the speed and ferocity of hardcore punk, inspired by bands such as Black Flag, Dead Kennedys, and Bad Brains, with the heavy metal techniques of burgeoning thrash metal bands like Metallica and Slayer. Just as Discharge had influenced British hardcore bands, eventually spawning crust punk bands like Deviated Instinct and Antisect, American hardcore bands influenced the scene in the United States. Crossover thrash became the American counterpart to British crust punk. Both genres mixed the latest heavy metal with the most recent developments in hardcore punk to create a crossover subgenre with unique aesthetics. Not all American bands followed the same trends, however, and, the relatively obscure at the time, British hardcore scene influenced one New York City band: Nausea.

Nausea is the first American crust punk band. The band began life amidst the squat scene in New York City around 1985, with a quickly rotating cast of musicians and singers. Nausea's earlier line-up was influenced by bands like Crass, Black Sabbath, Amebix, Discharge, and Venom (Nausea 2004). By the time the band solidified, the

band's sound was equal parts "Discharge, Crass, Black Sabbath, Slayer, and Pink Floyd." Compared to the hardcore and metal in the United States, Nausea stood apart. Their sound was heavier and more metallic than their American hardcore contemporaries, but it was also slower, darker, and more anarcho-punk influenced than many of the crossover and hardcore punk bands at the time. Additionally, they took more cues from the British hardcore and crust punk scene than from American hardcore bands. For instance, they emulated Crass's use of dual vocalists, originally featuring Neil Robinson (later replaced by Al Long of Misery) and Amy Miret. Their politics also emulated the British anarcho-punk scene more than the American hardcore bands such as Black Flag and the Bad Brains. Instead of lyrics dealing with everyday social ills, Nausea focused on nuclear extinction, environmental pollution, technology, anti-religion, and animal rights. Their first release coincided with the creation of Profane Existence, a punk collective formed in Minneapolis, Minnesota, put together for the initial purpose of funding and distributing the burgeoning American anarcho-punk/crust punk/hardcore scene. Nausea's first LP *Extinction* was not released until 1990 on vinyl. By this time however, Nausea had created a name for themselves by touring extensively with other New York hardcore bands and aligning themselves with the squat movement in New York City taking place in the mid-80s. *Extinction* (1990) features a plethora of sonic variety, melding crossover thrash guitar styling with dirge-like introductions, even breaking into a ska/reggae style mid-section on the track "Sacrifice." Although Nausea list thrash metal bands, such as Slayer, as influencing their sound, the guitar playing sticks to a fairly straightforward hardcore sensibility. While Nausea's sound is metallic

hardcore in the vein of early British crust punk, there are few traces of typical thrash metal playing techniques, such as palm-muted 16th notes punctuated by power chords. *Extinction* (1990) set the stage for more experimental, open-ended, inclusive generic resources in crust punk. Throughout their career Nausea pushed the sonic boundaries of what crust punk could be considered. They were, and still are, one of the most influential crust punk bands to have come upon the scene, a name that has become as ubiquitous as Amebix in modern crust punk.

With the creation of Profane Existence a different form of hardcore had an outlet. Modeled after anarcho-punk collectives in Britain associated with the bands Crass and Flux of Pink Indians, Profane Existence gave American crust punk bands the opportunity to be heard (Thompson 2004). Misery followed closely on the heels of Nausea. A metallic hardcore/crust punk band from Minneapolis, Misery like Nausea before them, combined the underground anarcho-politics and rhetoric with an updated crust punk sound. Misery's sound is more thrash-metal influenced, featuring down-tuned guitars often playing in a more metallic, technically oriented fashion, as opposed to the simple power chord riffs of many hardcore bands at the time. Misery became one of *the* defining crust punk bands in Minneapolis in the mid to late-80s. Just as the early 1980s saw regionally defined hardcore punk scenes wax and wane in places like New York, Boston, Washington, D.C., and California, the late-80s saw a rise in regional crust scenes.

While nowhere near as prolific as their hardcore punk brethren, crust punks became associated with scenes centered on record labels, distributors, bands, and fan

infrastructures. In the mid-west (Minnesota/Wisconsin) there was Misery and Destroy!; in the north-east (New York City and Boston), Nausea and Disrupt; in the southern United States, Antischism; and in northern California, the early work of Neurosis. Most of these locations/scenes primarily revolved around only a handful of bands, and crust punk as a distinct scene in and of itself in America was almost non-existent until the 1990s. Minneapolis and New York being somewhat the exceptions to the rule due to Profane Existence and the existing punk squatter scene, respectively. Many crust punk bands in the late-80s in the United States existed alongside and in conjunction with the larger network of hardcore punk more generally. Despite the incorporation of metal into hardcore expressive resources, many crust punk bands retained the anarcho-punk D.I.Y. ideology. Profane Existence quickly became just one of many hardcore punk distributors and scene contributors. Multiple record labels, 'zines, and collectives, like Havoc Records, Prank Records, and CrimethInc, cropped up around the United States. An underground infrastructure was created to support the burgeoning crust punk and metallic hardcore bands that followed the decline of the more traditional hardcore punk scenes based around New York, Boston, California, and Washington D.C.

By 1990 heavy metal had progressed further from thrash metal with the creation of what is known as death metal and black metal. Death metal began as a direct extension of thrash metal. Early death metal bands, such as Death and Possessed, utilized many of the same expressive resources as thrash metal (listen to *Scream Bloody Gore* 1987 and *Seven Churches* 1985 respectively). Death metal introduced the technique of a low, guttural, oftentimes incomprehensible vocal delivery, with an

ominous down-tuned, mid-scooped guitar tone focused around the melodic and pentatonic minor scales. This could be thought of as combining the aesthetics of doom and dread from early heavy metal, such as Black Sabbath, with the speed, precision, and ferocity of thrash metal. What set death metal apart from thrash metal was the lyrical and iconographic concentration on themes of death, mutilation, gore, and violence. Death metal began as an American phenomenon, quickly spreading to Britain and Western Europe in the late 1980s.

Similarly, black metal was emerging in Norway with the codification of the genre, in what is known as “the second wave of black metal.” The first wave of black metal is considered to be those earlier bands, such as NWOBHM band Venom that coined the phrase on their 1982 release *Black Metal*. Black metal as it is known today owes more to the developments that took place after the creation of thrash metal with Norwegian bands such as Mayhem, Immortal, Darkthrone, Burzum, and Emperor. The black metal played by these bands is the first instance of a unique set of black metal expressive resources. The second wave of black metal bands took the speed and playing techniques from thrash metal and combining it with overt satanic imagery and lyrical content. In contrast to the low, guttural gurgle of death metal vocal delivery, black metal vocals are often high-pitched, and mimic screams or screeching demons. Black metal also utilizes the technique of tremolo picking, a style of playing in which the guitarist rapidly plucks a string with an up and down movement, creating buzz saw effect sonically (Hagen 2011).

Both death metal and black metal would become components in crust punk. Death metal playing techniques and aesthetics were appropriated much more quickly into crust punk than black metal. I will discuss the relationship between black metal and crust punk later on, since it would not be till around 2006 that the two genres would begin to influence each other. Death metal, however, played a much more influential role on crust punk in the late 1980s, particularly in Britain.

In Grind We Crust

At the same time as the United States was experiencing the explosion of hardcore/metal crossover, the development of death metal, and emerging crust punk scenes, further changes were happening in Britain. By the mid-80s hardcore in Britain was evolving into what is now called “grindcore;” extremely fast hardcore punk with the incorporation of death metal techniques. Many crust punk bands from that time period are seen as forefathers of the genre. And, the relationship between modern crust punk and grindcore is still a matter of distinction based on individual definition. In fact, many bands, such as Extreme Noise Terror, choose to simply call themselves a hardcore band, eschewing notions of sub-sub-genre, such as crust punk, grindcore, stenchcore, and others, in favor of simplicity (Glasper 2009). Another band, Doom (sometimes seen spelled as “DooM”), sounds like the British predecessor of grindcore. Doom is the British equivalent to the Dirty Rotten Imbeciles (D.R.I.) in America. The music played by Doom sounds like metallic hardcore punk with the speed of crossover thrash, and the down-tuned, overly distorted guitars of the emerging grindcore sound in the U.K. They were inspired by earlier anarcho-punk bands like Discharge, and eventually by the

budding Swedish hardcore scene. Doom inspired by Rudimentary Peni and Crass “with added bits of thrash” from Napalm Death and MDC then “mixed anarcho-punk ethics with a much less metallic Discharge-influenced punk-style sound” (Glasper 2009, 26) Unlike the emerging grindcore style, however, the guitar technique follows the standard use of power chords in fast succession as was typical for British hardcore punk at the time. Doom’s vocal sound is reminiscent of the earlier crust punk bands like Deviated Instinct, with a lower pitched “tough-guy” growl and a cleaner mid-range shout. What sets Doom apart from their predecessors, however, is their utilization of metal/punk crossover speed. Doom’s 1989 EP *Police Bastard* showcases the difference between the dirge-like heavy metal chug of a band like Deviated Instinct and the speed and intensity of what was to become grindcore.

During the same time other bands in the United Kingdom were pushing the sonic boundaries of hardcore and metal. Extreme Noise Terror along with Napalm Death helped codify not only the grindcore sound, but also what would become the latest in crust expressive resources. Napalm Death supposedly coined the term “grindcore” to refer to their specific brand of hardcore that utilized break-neck speed (often 180 plus beats per minute), the “blast-beat” drum-pattern, the “grinding” sound of their guitars, and death metal style vocal delivery. Grindcore, like crossover thrash before it, was a combination of the latest progression in heavy metal with hardcore punk ideologies and rhetorics. Napalm Death emerged from the same British hardcore scene as Extreme Noise Terror (E.N.T.) paying tribute to Discharge, Crass, and others. What makes E.N.T. a crust band and not a grindcore band is the fact that unlike many grindcore bands at the

time they did not evolve into the “cleaner” more technically precise metal oriented style of playing. Bands such as Napalm Death and Carcass began their careers in the anarcho-punk scene in Britain. However, as the band’s progressed their sound took on a more death metal sound with the speed of grindcore, sonically separating them from the existing hardcore and crust punk scene. In addition, while Extreme Noise Terror helped create the grindcore sound, Napalm Death pushed the envelope of speed and song brevity to new heights. Most Extreme Noise Terror songs last for a minimum of a minute to as much as four minutes. In stark contrast, the sheer speed and succinctness of Napalm Death earned them the Guinness Book of World records for shortest recorded song ever for “You Suffer” from *Scum* (1987), lasting only one minute and three seconds.

Between 1980 and 1995 developments in the Swedish hardcore scene were making their impact on the British scene. Swedish hardcore utilized the d-beat inspired by British anarcho-punk band Discharge. Early Swedish hardcore bands, such as Avskum, Totalitär, and Anti Cimex, ushered in the British influenced Swedish crust punk sound. In the process, they influenced British bands such as Doom, and eventually even American bands. The bands from Sweden that appeared in the 1990s codified the Swedish d-beat crust punk sound. Groups like Skitsystem, Wolfbrigade (previously known as Wolfpack), Disfear, and Driller Killer, evolved alongside the burgeoning Scandinavian death metal scene. One band, Disfear, straddled the boundaries of crust punk and death metal so much so that they belied qualification as one or the other (Ekeroth 2009). Many of the crust punk bands in Britain cite the Swedish scene as

influential to the emerging grindcore sound (Glasper 2009). Likewise, the Swedish d-beat sound combined with the grindcore inflected British crust punk opened the door to a plethora of expressive possibilities for crust punk everywhere.

The 1990s — Proliferation

By the mid-1990s crust punk as a genre had exploded. Crust punk bands were establishing themselves as a distinct hardcore punk phenomenon in countries all around the world. Likewise, crust punk bands proliferated in the United States and Britain, bolstered by the establishment of scene specific infrastructures such as Profane Existence. The sheer diversity in expressive resources at this time in the formation of crust punk had evolved into a plethora of descriptive names and identifiers. Crust punk bands from the mid-1990s onward were free to sound like any of the incarnations that came before them. Some bands continued the trend of constantly shifting and transgressing previously established genre norms, others crystallized around the expressive resources found in earlier forms, still others blended multiple crust types to create their own unique sound. The evolution of crust punk in the 90s follows the same pattern as earlier crust punk, combining the latest sounds from extreme metal with hardcore punk aesthetics, ideologies, and performance practices. The ideologies of crust punk became solidified in the mid-90s due to an abundance of publications connected to record labels, distributors, and collectives. Under the rubric of anarcho-punk a la Crass, crust punk bands by the 1990s tackled subject matter ranging from environmental issues, economics, war, human extinction, commercialism, animal rights, and veganism/vegetarianism. This set crust punk apart from the other trends in hardcore from

the mid-1980s through the 90s. Metallic hardcore bands, particularly in the United States, espoused a similar set of ideologies, however, they aligned themselves with what is known as the “straightedge” movement. Straightedge has a long and complicated history that is outside the scope of this discussion. However, the important difference between straightedge and crust punk is simple: crust punks drink and do drugs, straightedge punks abstain from alcohol, drugs, and in some cases even sex. Similarly, the genealogy of metallic hardcore punk bands aligned with straightedge follows the path of American hardcore punk scenes established in the early 1980s.

Just as early crust pioneers, such as Deviated Instinct and Hellbastard, blended then current heavy metal with anarcho-punk, contemporary bands incorporate everything from death, grindcore, to black metal. The first band to experiment with black metal techniques was Black Kronstadt, a crust band from Victoria, British Columbia. The band recorded only a few EPs and one LP. Their 1996 LP *The Free Spirit* sounds like anarcho-punk political ideologies mixed with second wave black metal aesthetics. Members of Black Kronstadt would go on to form Iskra, the band many contemporary critics and fans attribute to creating what is known as “blackened crust.” Iskra’s brand of blackened crust punk has garnered much more attention than that of Black Kronstadt because of their Profane Existence self-titled 2004 release. For all intents and purposes they are an anarcho-punk band playing in the style of early black metal. Iskra has two vocalists, in keeping with the anarcho-punk influence, although both vocalists eschew typical crust punk delivery opting instead to perform in the established black metal style. Another band Antimaster from Mexico City occasionally incorporate melodic guitar

playing in the black metal tremolo picked guitar style. Antimaster plays a Spanish language version of Scandinavian d-beat crust, replete with Swedish-style production values, with added touches of black metal guitar technique.

Other contemporary bands verge on crossing generic boundaries. Many contemporary crust punk bands such as, Mass Grave from Vancouver, British Columbia, play the style of crust punk associated with grindcore. What keep Mass Grave from completely becoming a grindcore band are the finer nuances in their music. Many of their songs incorporate slow, groove-heavy breakdowns, interrupting the fast-paced onslaught of blast-beats and grinding guitar. Similarly, the band Stormcrow from Oakland, California, play a contemporary style of crust punk that sounds so much like death metal they often play extreme metal festivals and concert venues, such as the Maryland Death Fest, as readily as if they were a death metal band.

Conclusion

Musically crust punk has become nearly impossible to differentiate from some of the extreme metal genres or hardcore punk and anarcho-punk more generally. Many crust punk bands and fans call themselves “crust punk” for political reasons. Crust punk has a specific genealogy, and aligning oneself with it differentiates from hardcore punk, anarcho-punk, metallic hardcore, or extreme metal ideologies, political stances, performance practices, and embodied knowledges. Crust punk, specifically the shortened version “crust,” has become an adjective in the musical world as much so as its original meaning. Crust punk borrows from so many other genres, and more recently has become the source for further exchange back into those genres. For example, the black metal

band Darkthrone's last three albums sounded more like crust punk than black metal. Drummer Fenriz admits that punk has influenced him as much as metal (Ekeroth 2009). This has given rise to all sorts of descriptors, such as "crusty black metal." Similarly, with the recent resurgence in popularity of thrash metal there are "crusty thrash" bands.

"Crusty" anything and "crust punk" relies on the identification with established aesthetics that emerged with bands like Deviated Instinct and Hellbastard, evolved through Nausea, and now reside in surfeit expressive resources and styles. In many instances it is easier to tell when something or someone is *not* "crusty" or crust punk. As example, the band Axegrinder, emerging from the same scene as Hellbastard, was accused of not being crusty enough at the time (Glasper 2009). This despite the fact that "musically [they] were initially influenced by Frost, Hellbastard, [Black] Sabbath, Antisect (*Out from the Void*-era), while lyrically...coming very much from the anarcho-punk perspective: anti-war, anti-religion, vegetarianism, etc" (335, 2009). The reason they were not considered crusty enough is because they did not come from a squat, they actually rehearsed, and refrained from getting "blind drunk" before performing live (339).

By today's standards, Axegrinder are regarded as integral part of early crust punk. In spite of being accused of not being crusty enough, the band, although short-lived, is an influential part of crust punk in the United Kingdom during the early to mid-1980s. This leads to the question of authenticity in crust punk. With so much variety, musically and stylistically, who or what is considered an "authenticate" crust punk? The

next chapter will tackle that question utilizing examples from and analysis of my fieldwork in Austin, Texas.

CHAPTER III

THE AUSTIN, TEXAS CRUST PUNK SCENE

In this chapter I will discuss my ethnographic experiences within the local Austin, Texas scene. I conducted fieldwork in Austin at the four-day extreme metal and punk festival called Chaos in Tejas and then returned for two warehouse shows featuring local and touring bands a month later. The warehouse shows literally took place in an industrial building that doubled as a punk venue. The bulk of my research consists of participant-observation with semi-structured interviews, when possible, with scene members. By participant-observation I mean the participation in the ongoing festival as an audience member while observing other participants behavior both inside and out of performance venues. In order to participate it was necessary for me to avoid standing out from the crowd. This was not a hard feat to accomplish, due in part to my many years participating in the extreme metal scene. However, I would like to stress the point that although the extreme metal and crust punk scenes overlap in many ways, my involvement in the former did not preclude my access to the latter. In at least one instance my involvement in the extreme metal scene was cause for some harassment by established crust punk scene participants. While waiting for the doors to open, outside the Beerland venue, my choice of attire was commented on by several crust punks unfamiliar with the extreme metal band featured on my t-shirt. Although they found the epithet on the back of my t-shirt “who needs a god when you’ve got satan” to be an entertaining statement, it also represented the sort of heavy metal posturing eschewed by the crust punk bands that were discussed in the previous chapter.

Because of the nature of the festival many of the streets and sidewalks become performance spaces in and of themselves, at once contained within the bounds of the festival and yet standing wholly apart from the organized flow of events. Likewise, one of the shows I attended, a “house show,” several miles removed from the main festival located in downtown Austin, capitalized on the opportunities offered in an urban area. The urban atmosphere of Austin allowed the creation of alternate venues and performance spaces not legitimized by the organizers of Chaos in Tejas, yet completely within the normative cultural purview of hardcore punk and underground metal. Performing at that house show were several local and touring bands, one of which, Mass Grave, also played two separate venues as part of the festival. The purpose of the house show was to bring together even more “underground” crust punk and grindcore bands in one location. Other than Mass Grave, none of the other bands that played were featured on the Chaos in Tejas schedule. For at least one band, Sixbrewbantha, the show produced a much-needed influx of cash. Mass Grave and Sixbrewbantha were on tour together; Mass Grave was fortunate enough to garner enough attention to be a part of the festival, but Sixbrewbantha, unfortunately, were not. Because the house show was by word-of-mouth only and not part of the sanctioned festival, I was surprised at the sheer number of people who went out of their way to attend the performance. The show took place at the same time as scheduled afternoon festival events; attendees that purchased prepaid all-access bracelets would have had to make the conscious decision to pay five dollars for an unsanctioned event during the festival. It was at this show and other more intimate gatherings that I was able to gather more than participant-observation data. This

offered me the chance to get to know the bands and fans better through unstructured interviews and general conversation. Unlike the structured routine of the festival atmosphere, the small house show and subsequent warehouse shows presented a more open and relaxed space for participants, as well as myself and my choice of ethnographic methodology. Much of my “interview” data was collected in these spaces, as opposed to the rigorous participation schedule promoted by multiple festival agendas. Except for a few fortuitous interactions between band sets or outside on the sidewalk between venues, exchanges between festival attendees and myself were brief and relatively unexceptional.

This is not to say that my attendance at the festival did not give me a new insight into the nature of the crust punk scene or an event organized around multiple overlapping sub-genres in the hardcore punk and underground extreme metal scenes. Unlike many extreme metal festivals, such as Maryland Death Fest, Mayhem Festival, Ozzfest, and others, Chaos in Tejas caters to a specifically “underground” metal/punk crossover audience, featuring crust punk, death, black, and thrash metal, straight-edge hardcore, grindcore, “raw” punk, “noise,” and other distinctively “underground” bands. On the 2012 Chaos in Tejas roster were bands such as Black Witchery, an underground black metal band from my hometown of Oviedo, Florida. Likewise, the festival promoters boasted the last ever appearance of the legendary Swedish grindcore band Nasum, which headlined the first night of performances. Chaos in Tejas organizers pride themselves on featuring international acts appearing for their only North American performance, sometimes for the first or second time ever in the history of the band. For

example, I attended concerts by Japanese crust punk bands Reality Crisis and Zyanose. Reality Crisis' only United States show was at an after-party event in an out-of-the-way warehouse venue at well past three in the morning. It still attracted just as many participants as the preceding festival events earlier that same evening.

The focus of this chapter will be to address the complex relationship between crust punks and crusties. Part of this discussion will focus on the question of authenticity within the crust punk music scene, as well as the use of the “crusty” identifier. In *Music as Social Life: the Politics of Participation* (2008) Thomas Turino defines identity as “the *partial* and *variable* selection of habits and attributes that we use to represent ourselves to ourselves and to others, as well as those aspects that are perceived by ourselves and by others as salient” (102). Authenticity and identity are difficult subjects to tackle, and within the world of crust punk and crusties, they are particularly fraught with issues of authority, definition, and perspective. Just as I have shown in the preceding chapter how crust punk becomes the site of an anarchic representation of the uniquely anarcho-punk social contract of musical genre, I will show how identity and authenticity are worked through within the politics of the crust punk scene. Notions of authenticity and identity, both within and from outside the scene, operate across different political spectrums. Authenticity and identity operate in tandem within the Austin crust punk scene. In the scene there is a denial of authenticity as it pertains to crust punk and crusty crust punk identification. So that, the identification as “authentic” is always disavowed, in part due to anarchist stances on authority.

For example, as a long-time participant in the extreme metal scene, I can personally attest to experiences dealing directly with my authenticity and the representation of my own identity relative to the scene. At age twelve I wore my first heavy metal t-shirt to school, featuring the art for Megadeth's album *Killing is my Business...and Business is Good* (1985). Here my authenticity was challenged by other "metalheads." The other kids that listened to Megadeth wanted to make sure I was not what they call a "poser." A "poser" is someone who dresses or acts the part, perhaps wearing band t-shirts or other scene specific fashion and iconography but does not actually listen to or participate in the heavy metal scene. In her book *Wannabes, Goths, and Christians: The Boundaries of Sex, Style, and Status* (2008) Amy Wilkins addresses a similar formulation of the "wannabe." Unlike the gendered, raced, and classed performances discussed by Wilkins in regards to Puerto Rican wannabes, the poser in heavy metal emulates subcultural norms and claims to authenticity and identification. While I am not suggesting that issues of race, class, and gender do not play a part in the politics of heavy metal authenticity, it is outside the scope of this project to delve into them further here. Rather, for my purposes, it is more useful to focus on those attributes held in common between heavy metal and crust punk subcultures. In my experience, the notion of a poser in heavy metal has more to do with the performance, or lack thereof, of what Keith Kahn-Harris recognizes as "subcultural savoir-faire" and requisite "mundane" subcultural practices (Kahn-Harris 2011). Kahn-Harris defines "mundane" as those "everyday activities [through which] the scene is produced — rehearsing, corresponding, trading, buying CDs (2011, 211). "Mundane subcultural capital is

produced through a sustained investment in the myriad mundane practices through which the scene is produced... a crucial element of [which] is the demonstration of savoir-faire within the scene” (2011, 211). “Scene members claim subcultural capital by knowing the complex histories of the scene and by having heard the music of its vast number of bands” (211-212).

To complicate matters further, perspective makes all the difference; a subcultural insider can more easily identify a poser than an outsider. For all intents and purposes, the poser wearing the same band t-shirt, jeans, boots and long hair with appropriate style in the perceived norm of the scene *is* an authentic performance of subcultural norms. But that performance is just one of many required to claim authenticity within a scene. Simply looking the part does not make someone authentic. In many cases, only looking the part marks a person as a fraud, or poser. Wearing the correct clothes, attending shows, having knowledge of the requisite bands, and history of the scene all work together to infer authenticity. Furthermore, since it is the performance of subcultural savoir-faire and mundane practices that constitute authenticity within the scene, those specific knowledges and actions can become the very sites of contestation in and of themselves. For example, a person may demonstrate the appropriate amount of subcultural savoir-faire about bands within the extreme metal scene that others deem inauthentic for a host of other reasons, often based upon a complex set of politics within the scene itself.

Crust Punks

Within the crust punk scene, which is similar to extreme metal in many ways, the same performance of mundane practices is requisite in order to create and maintain the scene itself. The mundane practices exhibited in crust punk are much greater for an individual than those practices needed to produce the extreme metal scene because of punk's D.I.Y. nature. There are no major record labels, commercial fanzines, or an infrastructure for producing t-shirts, patches, and other iconography. Many crust punk bands produce their own materials, sometimes with the help of scene specific labels and distributors such as Profane Existence. Unlike the extreme metal scene, however, one's relationship to the means of production in crust punk does not mean that one accrues more subcultural capital. In my experience with the extreme metal scene, I noticed that fans, bands, and scene contributors or infrastructures (such as fanzine producers, independent record and/or distribution labels) occupy three separate cultural capital spheres. Fans participate in the mundane practices necessary to gain cultural capital but will never have the same amount of capital as bands or contributors. In extreme metal bands occupy the top tier of cultural capital. Crust punk works differently, in that, there is no differentiation between fans, bands, and contributors. In true anarchist fashion, many collectives, labels, and distributors are based on the free association of individuals for specific purposes. As Dan from Profane Existence explained to me between songs at an Appalachian Terror Unit show, nobody is making a profit in the crust punk scene. In many instances bands, labels, and distributors may even operate at a relative loss. This is similar to the ethos within the underground extreme metal noted by Kahn-Harris:

“Mundane subcultural capital is produced through the commitment to work hard *for* the scene. Mundane scene involvement is constructed as an altruistic, ethical commitment to the collective” (2011, 212).

The display of insider knowledge in the crust punk scene is also a performance of authenticity and legitimizing identity within the scene. Many crust punks will display patches or pins on their vest or wear t-shirts of core crust punk bands such as Discharge, Amebix, Doom, Nausea, and Crass. This is an authenticating signal to other participants in the scene that they at least are aware of genealogy of crust punk, as well as possible length of involvement. For example, due to my age and my display of knowledge of crust punk music from the 1980s and 90s, I gained a level of credibility with my often much younger interlocutors. However, in more than a few instances, my lack of knowledge about more recent “underground” bands exposed me as the scene novice, or at least an out-of-touch “old guy.”

Unlike the extreme metal scene and the music associated with it, crust punks share a closer stylistic genealogy to punk from the 1970s. Whereas extreme metal participants are expected to buy and wear bands’ t-shirts and sometimes adorn vests with patches and pins, crust punks adorn clothing with related scene iconography that is not part of bands’ official merchandise and many times handmade by the wearer. The critical difference between the two exists in the genealogical differences between punk and metal. The perfect example of this is the use of the vest in both extreme metal and crust punk scenes. Within the extreme metal scene, the “battle” vest has regained popularity from the 1980s. Fans will meticulously arrange, order, and sew band patches

onto a denim or leather vest, often completely covering it in patches; in so doing they display their knowledge and fandom of the extreme metal scene's vast number of bands. Crust punks similarly employ the vest as display within the crust punk scene; unlike extreme metal participants, they adorn their vests with spikes and studs, with many less band patches and music scene iconography. The stud and spike look, with few references to bands in the crust punk scene, is something I attribute to crust punk's shared genealogy of metal and punk. The studs and spikes owe a stylistic history to the punk jacket, often a leather motorcycle jacket adorned with a plethora of studs and/or spikes, featuring hand painted artwork or patches of punk bands. Unlike other punk subgenres, crust punk owes an equal heritage with heavy metal and the "biker" look that emerged with bands like Motörhead, and the genre crossing of early crust punk bands like Deviated Instinct, as discussed in the previous chapter. The denim vest featuring both studs, spikes, and patches is a uniquely crust punk bricolage of both heavy metal and punk aesthetics, setting crust punk apart from, yet still intimately linked, to both genealogies.

The use of the vest in crust punk is just one of the similarities shared with extreme metal. Much like the economic system at play in the extreme metal scene, crust punk operates within its own economic sphere. By encouraging trade instead of exchange of monies, crust punks try to extricate themselves from capitalist models of exchange. However, they replicate the commodity fetishism inherent in capitalism. This is not to negate my earlier point that crust punk operates on a D.I.Y. level, with very little if any profit being earned by fans and those participants that maintain scene

infrastructures. To participate in the scene necessitates a base level of monetary investment. Crust punks must have the financial means, however limited, to purchase band shirts, recordings, and concert tickets. Economics is the main distinction between crust punks and crusties.

While the cost of participating in the crust punk scene could be considered relatively low, even for the largely working-class scene constituency, those costs separate them from their crusty brethren. During my time at Chaos in Tejas I observed numerous examples in which having the financial means to simply attend the festival became a mark of inclusion, as well as exclusion of specific scene defined boundaries. All of the people I spoke with during the festival pointed to the relatively high investment that attending Chaos in Tejas required of them. One attendee travelled with several of his friends all the way from Albuquerque, New Mexico, staying with mutual acquaintances in what was most likely a local squat. I cannot positively say where any of my interlocutors stayed, with the exception of a group from Chicago who explained that they pooled their money to rent a small house for the weekend, in which two of them slept on the floor. The cost of festival tickets, and money for food and beer was something that necessitated an entire years worth of saving and planning for all of the people I spoke with.

I do not, however, want to paint an essentialized picture of crust punks as working-class. I observed many local and non-local festival participants that exhibited more well to do (possibly middle or upper-class) financial means. Within the scene I did not observe any relationship between economic class status and perceived authenticity

among crust punks. It is entirely possible for a person to be a middle class participant in the crust punk music scene, that is, to be authentically “crust punk” despite not ever having any crusty aesthetics or experiences. This means that a middle class crust punk does not have to be visibly dirty, or possess the knowledge of the transient, squatting and train-hopping community to be considered authentic within the scene. This can be contrasted with the brief discussion in the previous chapter of Axegrinder, contemporaries of Deviated Instinct, as inauthentically crust punk because they were not associated with the squat scene and did not display the then-current standards of authentic crust punk involvement.

The term “crust punk” itself has become a contested site of authenticity and identity within the scene. Of all the participants I had an opportunity to talk with at the festival, only one person, the bassist for the band Mass Grave, admitted to actually being crust punk. When I addressed this issue with other participants, all of them either denied the use of the term in favor of another identifier or cited their lack of “authentic” crustiness for not being crust punks. My interlocutor from Albuquerque preferred to think of himself as associated more with the doom metal scene, although his hairstyle (a mullet of dreadlocks) and fashion, as well as every other external indicator marked him otherwise. His taste in music as exhibited on his vest and t-shirts, his dreadlocks, the style of clothing he wore, the general lack of personal hygiene, and his penchant of alcohol and drug use firmly place him within the definition of a crust punk. Likewise, the group from Chicago that I spoke with admitted that, although they may appear pretty crusty, none of them had ever hopped a train, squatted or lived on the streets before. To

them, this meant that they did not consider themselves “crust punks” or at least not crusty enough to call themselves crust punks. It was in my conversation with them on the porch outside the Mass Grave show that I realized the extent to which crust punk identity is bound up with issues of authenticity. When discussing the matter, several of them used the term “those people,” referring to others just like themselves who are crusty and listen to crust punk, but may have hopped a train only once in their life and then made claims to crust punk authenticity and identity. There was an ambiguity to their statements, as if they were uncomfortable or unable to place themselves or others within discourses of authenticity and identity. At first I thought they were making claims that, if someone has only hopped a train once and claims crustiness, it was considered inauthentic. The more I thought about our conversation, however, I realized it was not them referring to other peoples authenticity but to their own perceived lack of authenticity.

In sum, participants in the crust punk scene exhibit specific forms of anxiety about authenticity. While authenticity is a key issue for many music subcultures, authenticity anxiety here is so great that few, if any, adherents of the scene will admit to being insiders — even when they display all of the characteristics.

Crusty Crust Punks and Crusties

During my time at both Chaos in Tejas, and the subsequent shows I attended nearly a month later, I strove to interact with those participants that most scene members would qualify as an authentically crusty crust punks. As it so happened, the first person I interacted with was such a man. I never managed to get him to give me his name, but he

did converse freely about why he came to Austin (for the festival), as well as to give me some details about his life (he arrived by train from Atlanta where he left his girlfriend and newborn baby). Although he was definitely crusty, at first I was wary of interacting with him, since he did not exhibit any signs of participating in the crust punk scene. For example, he had on a plain, bright red t-shirt (albeit dingy and obviously unwashed), a pair of cut-off black denim shorts, and black, canvas-sided, jungle-style combat boots. His head was shaved and he had several days worth of beard growth, which I eventually discovered concealed a stick-and-poke facial tattoo on his chin. I also came to learn that he had an anarchy symbol tattooed on his leg, as well as the letters R.A.S.H. (Red and Anarchist Skin Head) on his left knuckles. There were a few of us waiting for the doors to open but he picked me, asking for a cigarette and a handout outside of the Red 7 venue. Sharing cigarettes, we talked about what was going on with the festival and which bands on the roster he wanted to try to see play, pointing to sometimes indecipherable logos on the poster hung outside the venue. He seemed to know more about the plethora of obscure bands than I did, correcting me if I misplaced where a band was from or unable to adequately describe their sound with genre adjectives. It was only after we talked for a few minutes that he pointed out his tattoos; without his explanation they would have been obscured by poor ink quality, stick-and-poke technique, and general sun-damage. During several short conversations I came to learn that he was very street savvy. Not ever having been to Austin before, he had quickly learned where he could stay, where to stash his belongings during a concert, and which dumpsters to pilfer from. At one point before the show at Red 7, he disappeared around the corner, only to

return nearly a half-hour later with a Styrofoam cup full of fortified wine, which he said, his friend had made. He offered to share, but I declined, explaining that the gallon jug of water I held was still not fending off dehydration or heat stroke in the hundred-degree heat of Texas in June. I asked him where he was staying, curious if there were any squats in the area. He artfully dodged my questions either by half answering them, changing the subject, or redirecting the question to me.

Unfortunately, when I entered the venue for the show, he disappeared again, and I would not interact with him again until two days later. He managed to coerce a young man visiting from Mexico City to pay his way into the concert featuring two of the festival's biggest draws, crust punk bands Antisect and Deviated Instinct. He wore the same clothes that day as he had two days before. This time he appeared inebriated, and took the opportunity to finish any leftover beer in thrown away cans left around the bar area. During the opening acts, he drunkenly mimed firing a make-believe automatic rifle up at a news helicopter covering the festival action, making the machine-gun noise and shouting political epithets at the news crew. It was after this display that he told me he had been to Central America, although he would not be specific about where, and that he had hopped a series of trains to get down there, fought alongside guerillas, and eventually came home to the United States only after becoming addicted to methamphetamines and heroin. When I inquired further about his involvement in these conflicts, he cited his knuckle tattoo, R.A.S.H., and spouted more political slogans, most of which I could not understand. He also explained to me that he would be morally justified in killing a police officer, although his beliefs would otherwise prohibit him

from taking another's life. He explained to me that the police were the ones waging the war on civilians; despite the fact that they may have a family and/or children (like himself) he said one less cop was the ideological imperative. I did not fully understand the ramifications of his drunken ramblings at that time, but upon my return to Austin several weeks later, I would have first hand experience of just why a person in his financial situation and his political stance would hate the police.

During the Antisect and Deviated Instinct performances I observed more crusty crust punks in the crowd than at any other show during the entire festival. The location of the venue, called the Mohawk, central to downtown, would have made it much easier for those on foot to attend this show. More than that, however, I sensed a definite connection between their presence at this show and the plethora of other crust punk offerings at which I observed no crusty presence. For example, the only other show that crusties attended that festival weekend was the house show featuring Mass Grave. And although travelling between that location and downtown would have been difficult, crusty crust punks found ways to borrow car rides, or piled three to a bicycle in order to attend. The house show was also the only other show to feature a number of the crust punks of which the Chicago group disparaged — those that made claims to “authentic” crust punk crustiness — participating in train-hopping and squatting perhaps only for as long as the festival. I want to be careful and point out that this does not mean that those people were somehow inauthentic, but rather that the very definition of authenticity in crust punk is constantly under construction. I will discuss that topic in more detail later on in the thesis.

Nearly a month after Chaos in Tejas, I returned to Austin, Texas to attend another concert, this one a much smaller affair than an international festival. One of the more “punk” venues that offered after-party concerts at Chaos in Tejas turned out to be a regular venue for crust punk bands, both locally and those stopping in Austin while on tour. The Broken Neck is an industrial warehouse cum punk performance space. Situated several miles outside the downtown area in a commercially zoned section of Austin, the Broken Neck is one of several warehouses constructed out of sheet metal and located in an economically underprivileged neighborhood. It is unlabeled, serves no beverages of any kind, and operates largely outside the purview of state and local authorities. The only way to identify it is by the large number of crusty looking punks congregating outside its roll-up door. I had come back to Austin in order to see the band Appalachian Terror Unit while on tour, as well as investigate more intimately two of the local bands on the roster, Deadly Reign and Doom Siren. While waiting to get into the warehouse, I sat on the warm pavement with several other crust punk fans. After my experience at Chaos in Tejas, I opted to quietly sit and listen in on conversations, rather than ask questions. My presence as an obvious outsider to the small, insular, Austin crust punk scene was acknowledged yet tolerated. I simply hung about, sipping ever-warming Lone Star beer and trying to blend in and play it cool in the Texas July heat. It worked perfectly.

By letting the others milling about outside inquire about me instead of the other way around, I was included in many conversations despite being the out-of-town interloper. Most of the conversations consisted of friendly banter among what seemed to

be a familiar set of scene participants. Topics ranged from the critique of other bands, to complaints about so-called more “professional” venues in downtown, to last night’s revelry, the day’s work, and the party to be had that evening. Within this group of people, there seemed to be little to no delineation between fans and bands, several of the people I initially mistook for fans waiting outside the warehouse were in actuality band members waiting for the rest of their band to arrive. Similarly, when the concert headliners Appalachian Terror Unit arrived, they received no preferential treatment. This can be thought of as what Victor Turner called “communitas,” specifically ideological communitas (which will be discussed further in the next chapter). Typically, the more well-known, touring band will play last. Appalachian Terror Unit instead discussed it amongst themselves and the two other bands to determine order. With only a five-dollar door charge to get into the warehouse, it became immediately apparent to me that the only money any of the bands were making was from the sale of merchandise. Unlike the experience of bands at a festival like Chaos in Tejas, the bands that came together to play at the Broken Neck self-organized to support the touring band. Likewise, unlike the organization and precision of a festival, the bands that played that night had to load their own gear on and off a makeshift stage constructed of no more than a framework of two-by-fours and wood sheeting as a platform. When Appalachian Terror Unit approached the stage to begin setting up their gear, they opted to instead simply play at the same level as the audience on the bare concrete floor. This made the set-up and strike of musical equipment much quicker, keeping the audience engaged and eagerly anticipating the performance through the sweltering heat and humidity of the unventilated warehouse

space. Appalachian Terror Unit is part of the Profane Existence label and distribution collective discussed in the previous chapter. Label mates Deadly Reign played last that evening, allowing A.T.U. to enjoy the remainder of the show and rest before continuing on their tour that same night.

Before and during that show, I had observed a group of five crusties sitting across the street in an empty lot overgrown with grass and weeds. Before the show began and between opening acts, they played acoustic instruments, guitar, accordion, and washboard, passing a bottle of cheap whiskey and a two-liter of mountain dew. Since most of the concert crowd exited the warehouse to escape the sweltering heat and close space, I followed along, observing the crusties at first from a distance. After it became known that one of the bands playing that evening was having technical difficulties, many crust punks opted to walk down the street to purchase more beer at a convenience store, or gathered in tightly knit groups to drink and smoke cigarettes. As the odd man out with no real connections to any of the people in the ever-increasing crowd, I walked across the street to investigate the impromptu performance among the crusties. At first they viewed me with suspicion, letting me loiter on the fringe of their circle. At the conclusion of one of their “songs,” I clapped to show my appreciation. This prompted the accordion player to laugh and engage me. He asked if I recognized the lyrics to the song they had been playing; I said I did not. He said they made up the instrumental parts as they went along but that he would typically use lyrics from popular hits, mostly from the 1990s, which he sung. At first I thought he might be testing my knowledge, but as he began to play and sing again I realized he was indeed utilizing

lyrics from a multitude of different popular songs, including artists such as Dashboard Confessional.

Talking with the group of crusties, it became apparent that all of them were passing through Austin in one degree or another, coming from locations as diverse as San Antonio, Texas, Portland, Oregon, and Wisconsin. They all just happened to be in Austin and had come to this location in hopes of seeing Appalachian Terror Unit and Deadly Reign (the only two bands known outside the Austin crust scene). As we conversed, I asked them if they were familiar with the folk crust punk band Blackbird Raum, who play a similar style of music as they were making. Blackbird Raum features original songs focused on anarchist ideology and everyday life in the anarchist, squatter, and crust scene punk scene. They responded with a resounding yes, as if to let me know that of course they had heard of Blackbird Raum. One of the group asked to borrow my phone, so that he could pull up a YouTube video of his band, called Days and Dazed, making much the same style of music, although dealing more with street life and the celebration of drug use. As we huddled around the small screen of my iPhone to watch and listen to a crudely recorded live video, he attempted to point himself out to me in the video. He also began to shake and shiver violently, apologizing, and cursing to himself; he admitted he was experiencing withdrawals after what sounded like a several day binge on heroin, and another member of the group gave him the whiskey, which he drank vigorously. Shortly after this, I walked back over to the warehouse to investigate the progress being made to get the show started again. The young man suffering withdrawals followed me over. I had previously paid my way into the warehouse, and he

had not, so he tried to scam his way in with the excuse of needing to use the restroom. The doorman and everyone around us seemed nervously repulsed by his presence, as if by walking across the street he had broken some unspoken rule about social boundaries. He asked if, at the very least, he could get some toilet paper, to which his request was vehemently denied. I went back in to see if more music was going to be played, and chatted with a few of the people who recognized me from before the show. Progress was slow because of D.I.Y. technical issues. I left the warehouse in hopes of rejoining my crusty interlocutors, but by this point, the young man needing to use the restroom had done his business in some bushes near the empty lot they were sitting in. Shortly thereafter, the din of loud music emanated from the warehouse. The show was back on.

I excused myself from the company of my crusty interlocutors, not wanting to miss the opportunity to see Doom Siren play and with the hope that I could possibly get some conversation time with A.T.U. I managed to briefly talk to the band's bassist and guitarist between songs; however, immediately after Doom Siren's set, it was Appalachian Terror Unit's turn to play. Before the end of the first song, I noticed that somehow four of the five crusties I had been talking with had managed to gain entrance to the warehouse. I am unsure if they snuck in through the back door or managed to finagle their way past the doorman — not an easy trick — considering he was in a wheelchair positioned directly in front of the only street access entrance and exit. Now quite inebriated, the young man suffering from withdrawals earlier seemed full of energy. During Appalachian Terror Unit's set he tried several times to initiate a mosh pit, even at times stumbling into the band members' themselves. Because of his distinct

lack of hygiene, everybody else in the crowd seemed frightened to touch him. He seemed covered in dirt, and smelled strongly of sweat and body odor, with clothes that looked as if they were dirty when he put them on, if they were ever clean. This was in contrast to the results during other bands' sets, in which crowd members freely initiated mosh pits with each other. His three friends seemed to hang back; at that point, I noticed a medium-to-small size dog accompanied the young woman in the group. She, her dog, and her male companion seemed content to simply stand with the rest of us in the crowd and bang their heads, sometimes shouting along with A.T.U.

Having witnessed the reaction of many of the crust punks in the crowd to the presence of the crusties after Appalachian Terror Unit's set was over I asked their guitarist his thoughts about what had happened. I framed my inquiry within the context of a mutually acknowledged split between, on the one hand, crust punk band and fans and, on the other hand, truly crusty crust punks. He explained that the crusty presence would be alright if they did not always start "stupid shit" and "party too much." In essence, he summed up the embodied reaction by the crowd earlier, that crusties were perceived as somehow both an integral part of the scene, and yet exist outside what has become the norms of the majority. Recall my discussion in the previous chapter of the ways that early crust punk bands defined themselves by participating in drunken excess, squatting, and being purposefully "crusty" in their appearance and hygiene. After talking with the singer for Appalachian Terror Unit she explained that many people in the scene, themselves included, lead fairly "normal" lives. She told me that each member of the

band had their own place of residence, several of them were in college, and only one of the band's members did not have kids.

After the show had ended, I retired to the relatively cool air outside the warehouse for a cigarette, in hopes of catching some last morsel of observational data among the crowd. Many people got in their cars and left; a few congregated in groups to finish drinks they had brought, smoked, and talked about the show and future plans. With no real ties to the community, I had planned on getting in my vehicle, collecting my thoughts in my field journal, returning to my hotel room for shower, and trying desperately to rehydrate. But on my way out of the warehouse loading dock, three of the four crusties approached me asking if I could give them a ride. They wanted me to take them to a place they kept referring to by an indecipherable name, which I later learned was a bastardization of one of the streets in important intersection. I think they assumed that, because I freely approached them earlier, I would be aware of certain localities that train-hopping crusties were familiar with. I was not. By the time we were on the interstate, it became apparent that I did not know where they expected me to take them, and they lacked the ability to adequately tell me exactly where it was they needed to go. One of them called a friend on an older model cell phone to find the exact intersection, which I then quickly mapped on my iPhone. I promised my crusty interlocutors not to disclose the exact location, but I came to find out that it is a well-known "hop-out" or place to illegally catch a train ride, for train-hoppers and crusty travelers. Knowing my affiliation with an academic institution, they explained that they did not care if I knew where the hop out was as long as I would not ruin the location by possibly exposing it to

the authorities. They told me that an anthropologist had made this type of mistake before in a cable network documentary several years ago, which now had a reputation among the train-hopping community. After dropping them off in an adjoining parking lot, they asked me to take one last group picture of them and forward it to their phones. With a train slowly squeaking by, they said that it could be their ride. We bid each other farewell, and I returned to my hotel room thinking then that would be last I saw of them.

Over the next three days, I would stay in contact with two of the crusties via cell phone. I came to learn that their train had not passed by yet, and they were stuck waiting under an overpass. Naturally, I took this opportunity to get to know these people better and experience first hand how the elusive “other-half” of the crust punk world lives. Unlike their crust punk brethren, these three crusties did not work and in one case had never worked. I want to be clear about one aspect of this small group: only two of its members were identifiably crust punk — that is, they listened to and otherwise participated in the crust punk music scene as best they could. The young woman, Olivia, wore a cut-up and obscured Discharge t-shirt, cut-off jean shorts, and boots, while her male companion, Daniel, wore a Maryland Death Fest t-shirt that was so old, dirty, and worn that if he had not highlighted the faded screen printing for me, I would have assumed it was simply a plain black t-shirt. It was also covered for most of the time by the bib of his black overalls. Olivia and Daniel also sported ragged black handkerchiefs around their necks, which served the dual purpose of offering protection from dust, smoke, and debris, as well as signaling to other crusties that they hopped-trains. The third member of the group, Charlie, was as crusty as the others but wore cut-off blue

jean shorts, a bright multi-colored serape, and a new looking purple handkerchief around his neck. He openly identified as homosexual and not really into crust punk, aligning himself more with dance music, folk music, rock, and gypsy punk. (Gypsy punk is another sub-sub-genre of punk music featuring Romani instrumentation like accordion, and typically dealing with “gypsy” themes such as the celebration of Romani culture, as well as discrimination). His choice of purple handkerchief also signaled that he was a train-hopping newbie, since black is the preferred color for many anarchist train-hoppers. In my conversations with Olivia and Daniel, which took place in my car and under the bridge, I learned that they listened to crust punk, despite initially avoiding the label when I asked outright. While under the bridge talking with Olivia and Daniel, I came to learn that Daniel listened to a variety of genres including outlaw country, black [metal], death [metal], punk, sludge [metal], folk, and raw hip-hop. In one of our excursions into the city without Olivia and Daniel, Charlie explained to me that even though they denied being crust punk, and generally avoided directly answering many of my questions, they were in fact crust punks. He had been friends with Olivia for several years and knew Daniel for most of the same time through mutual acquaintances, assuring me that their denial of being crust punks was only for my benefit. For example, in a car ride back to the Broken Neck to catch another show, I let all three of them have full control of my iPod. Olivia and Daniel chose to play Doom’s *Police Bastard* and tracks by a more contemporary crust punk band called Dystopia. Charlie only wanted to listen to tracks by the gypsy punk band Gogol Bordello.

I realized then that it was not that they did not associate themselves with the crust punk scene, but that my position as a researcher presupposed them wanting to present themselves as more than simply crusty. Although they had welcomed my presence, the negative connotations often associated with crustiness might have contributed to their shifts in identification. So that, although they were obviously crusty crust punks my position as a researcher made them want to represent themselves as more than just that aspect of the identities. Their positions eventually changed, as with the example in my car, actively choosing to listen to crust punk music in my presence (as opposed to actively disavowing identification with crust punk as mentioned above). Their general demeanor changed too, after they realized that I was willing to join them in their conditions. I resided with them full-time under the bridge while they waited for the right train to hop.

The Crust Punk/Crusty Problem

Crusty crust punks' everyday lives are not easy, neither physically nor emotionally. Unlike their crust punk counterparts, crusty crust punks endure grueling conditions, often suffering from hunger, disease, and addiction. After spending two days, hot, dirty, sweaty, avoiding Olivia's staph infected dog, starving, and (nearly) constantly drinking from two boxes of wine, I convinced Olivia, Daniel, and Charlie to come to another show at the Broken Neck with me. It had been nearly three days and nights, and their train had not passed through yet. Frustrations were mounting and the conditions were taking their toll on all of us. Another show would be a welcome change of

atmosphere, possibly alleviating the tediousness of waiting for a train that might not come for weeks. They agreed.

This show featured the group Wartorn from Appleton, Wisconsin on tour with several local supporting acts. At Chaos in Tejas I had encountered a young man who was roommates with the guitarist for Wartorn, I did not want to miss the opportunity to insert myself further into the Profane Existence scene. When the four of us arrived at the Broken Neck, our ragtag team approached the main entrance, my crusty interlocutors unabashedly carving out a place for us to sit on the hot asphalt among the gathering crowd. The show had not begun, and Wartorn had yet to arrive. A few of the people that I had conversations with only days earlier at the A.T.U. concert were present and recognized me. In fact, the only way I was aware that there was another show at the Broken Neck was through a text message from the wheelchair-bound doorman, with whom I had made acquaintances and exchanged cell phone numbers before the A.T.U. show.

Many of the same people that seemed happy to chat with me before the Appalachian Terror Unit show obviously did not approve of my association with the crusties or my newly embodied crustiness. Many avoided us altogether, and it was only due to my gregariousness that a few people talked to me alone. My crusty interlocutors seemed to acknowledge this fact, neither engaging anyone else nor trying to participate in majority activities, such as sharing beers, passing a bottle, and conversing. Being on the other side of the crust punk/crusty social dichotomy offered a unique lens into the experiences of both groups. My switching over to an association with the crusties was a

transgression of scene boundaries. It was bad enough I was from out of town, though the local Austin scene participants tolerated that; however once I became crusty myself, I had over-stepped my bounds. More so, I existed in a liminal state, not a “crusty” but also not, not a “crusty.” It had been days since I showered, my hair was matted beneath an old baseball cap, and I was covered in the dirt from the bare ground beneath the overpass. To complicate matters further my behavior blurred the line between crust punks and crusties because I was a “crusty” engaging crust punks in conversation — for instance, approaching and talking with Wartorn’s guitarist. Even the doorman seemed to be taken aback by my transgression. Where we freely conversed outside the venue before the A.T.U. show, he barely acknowledged my presence now, even after I made it a point to greet him and thank him for letting me know about the Wartorn show. As a courtesy he did allow all four of us into the show for free, but only after I assured him their rowdy friend from the A.T.U. show a few nights earlier was not present and that the dog would not be an issue.

I stated above that there was a dichotomy between crust punks and crusties. While this is something that is palpable at shows and in social interactions, it does not adequately represent the complexity of identity and authenticity within the crust punk scene. As I pointed out in the introduction to this thesis I use the term “crust punk” to denote someone who is a part of the crust punk music scene. Likewise, I use the term “crusty” to mean anyone who is visibly crusty, possessing the aesthetic “crustiness” that stems from an economic position, lifestyle choice, or both. A crust punk can be crusty, but just because someone is crusty does not make him or her a crust punk. Further in the

Austin scene, crustiness is not a badge of authenticity as it was with earlier scene participants, as discussed in the relationship between bands like Deviated Instinct and Axegrinder in the previous chapter. Crustiness as it relates to the crust punk scene is just one of many different facets of identity and/or authenticity. From what I observed, crustiness represents the furthest transgression of “mainstream” social norms for crust punks. Paradoxically, it also now alienates those who embody crustiness from the scene that birthed the crusty, punk-based aesthetic in the first place. In my discussions with crust punks, crusty crust punks, and crusties, it became clear to me that what sounded like claims of authenticity or inauthenticity were in actuality on-going negotiations about as of yet undefined, contestations of what constitutes authenticity within the scene. Because of the anarchist stances taken by scene members nobody wants to be the authority policing definitions of authenticity within the scene. I never once heard anyone within the scene refer to themselves or others as more authentically crust punk than others, or make references to “posers.” In fact, it was typically the opposite: many people did not find that they fit what they thought was the definition of a crust punk (e.g. the group from Chicago I discussed above). They defined a crust punk as someone who may have hopped a train or squatted only once in their lifetime, maintaining that aesthetic despite not permanently performing those practices. As a mark of authenticity, or in this case inauthenticity, when framed within the conversation we were having, it was their way of letting me know that they were not crust punks, at least not by their definition. None of them ever squatted, were homeless, or hopped a train. In my interactions between crusties and crust punks I noticed that although crust punks do not

necessarily enjoy crusties presence they are an integral part of the scene. For crust punks and crusty crust punks, it is their embodied practices, the literal and figural embodiment of scene ideologies, that keep crust punk from becoming the “childish Satanic, cock-rock” of metal and the metal scene (Glasper 2009, 286).

Crust punks do not judge other crust punks or crusties. For example, rather than Olivia and Daniel considering the other crust punks at the shows as inauthentic, they seemed to feel more isolated, and reflect a tragic inability to participate in the scene as fully as the other members. Crust punk and crustiness challenges Kahn-Harris’ notion that “[m]undane scene involvement is constructed as an altruistic, ethical commitment to the collective...through the commitment to work hard *for* the scene” (2011, 212). Part of participation in the crust punk scene is constructed as a commitment to the mundane practices such as attending shows, buying music and merchandise, as well as possessing the knowledge of the many bands within the scene. But crusties cannot participate in those same mundane practices because of their ideological choice to participate in another mundane crust punk practice, that of *being* crusty. This does not mean that one necessarily excluded the other, but that in performing crustiness, crust punks separate themselves from those mundane scenic practices that maintain the very scene itself. This is why, despite the perceived dangers of their presence, the smell, the risk of disease transmission, and a reminder of their own economic precarity, crust punks tolerate crusties at shows or in public spaces. Crusties are the “crust” in “crust punk.”

Discourses of authenticity are only fully understood from outside the scene. For example, it has become a popular Internet joke among some in the extreme metal scene

to produce altered pictures of crust punks or crusties with banners and titles such as “crust funder,” or other derogatory remarks. The reference to a “crust fund” or “crust funder” is an attempt to expose the performative nature of crusties and crust punks. This is almost always done by someone outside the scene, who views crusties as middle-class people who become “social parasites,” and “slum it” for fashion purposes, or in order to accrue what the person outside the scene imagines to be some form of subcultural capital. Interestingly enough, the term “crust fund” has been reappropriated by crusties in online blogs such as <http://crust-fund.tumblr.com/>, which features celebratory photographs taken of crusties and hobos often on trains or engaged in other mundane crusty activities such as busking, drinking, and camping. Because people outside the crust punk scene do not understand the importance of crustiness it is unfathomable to many why someone would choose such practices, particularly due to a lack of understanding crust punk’s underlying ideologies.

Conclusion

In sum, crusty crust punk authenticity becomes so highly valued that everyone within the scene disavows. Crust punks deny identification as “crust punks” even though they may have all the characteristics and have earned the identity of crust punk or crusty crust punk. Further, the constant flux between the crustiness of “authentic” crusty crust punk and simply crust punk exacerbates this disavowal. I have yet to meet anyone who has been or is what people within the scene consider an “authentically” crusty crust punk for very long. For the few people within the crust punk scene that do embody crust punk crustiness it alienates them from the scene that inspired their very embodiment in the

first place. Proximity to the scene is just one of many attributes that contribute to a single construction of authenticity and identity with/in the crust punk scene. The fraught relationship between crustiness and crust punk leaves everyone wondering who or what is to be considered the authentic article. This creates the discourse of denial, or disavowal, within discourses of authenticity in the crust punk scene. Nobody feels quite secure or sufficiently authoritative to self identify as crust punk or crusty crust punk. The few who do, such as the band Mass Grave, associate crust punk authenticity and identity with an explicit set of musical parameters and expressive resources. For crust punk fans, the identification as crust punk is fraught with anxiety: Because nobody feels comfortable claiming authenticity, no one claims identification as crust punk, crusty or otherwise.

Despite the discourse of denial within the scene there are clear markers of identity that can be read and mapped by outsiders. Scenes form, shows do take place, and crust punk exists in multiple discourses. As a researcher half in and half out of the scene, I was able to map the scene's contours of the relationships between crust punks, crusty crust punks, and simply crusties. Likewise, outsiders with similar proximity to the scene assume their own discourses of authenticity and identities in relation to crust punks. Many extreme metal fans disdain crust punks for transgressions that are associated with crusty crust punks. Many working-class metalheads cannot fathom why someone would choose to be homeless, dirty, or transient. Crusties and crusty crust punks expose working-class metalhead's own economic precarity. This results in an etic categorization of all crust punks (crusty or otherwise) as always already frauds, or

“posers.” Crust punks must wrestle with this formulation themselves everyday. To identify as a crust punk is to affirm the performance of a set of constructed embodied practices. Similarly, to identify as crust punk is to claim authenticity. Nobody wants to be seen as being a “poser,” but it’s easier to simply deny being a crust punk than to negotiate that operation within the scene. The only exception to this is the claiming of crust punk authenticity through historical narratives. Bands and fans that existed earlier in the scene, especially in the United Kingdom, possessed a strict set of requisites for both crust punk identity and authenticity. In the current historical moment, the discourses of crust punk (or crusty crust punk) authenticity and identity no longer operate within easily definable boundaries.

Crust punk authenticity and identity is affected by changing forms of class warfare, shifts in political ideologies, and global capital; constantly changing what it means to have been and to be a crust punk. Crustiness has remained a constant, but its role in determining authenticity has been fragmented, splintering crust punks into crusties who may or may not listen to crust punk, crusty crust punks, and the fans and participants in the crust punk music scene. Crust punk’s fraught relationship to crustiness is tied to life in contemporary capitalism. Crustiness transgresses almost every normative, modern, hegemonic operation. Being a crust punk, whether crusty or not, is to situate oneself within that transgressive discourse, poised on an apocalyptic past/present/future, and seated on the precipice of modern dystopia.

CHAPTER IV

THE TROPE OF THE APOCALYPSE AND DYSTOPIAN PERFORMATIVES

In this chapter I will discuss my theory of the dystopian performative and the role of apocalyptic rhetoric in the crust punk scene. To begin, I will define my theory of dystopian performatives and how it relates to Jill Dolan's theory of utopian performatives. Then, I will briefly contextualize apocalyptic rhetoric and the dystopian performative in crust punk history. I will be using research on two online forums that offer more direct quotation than my participant observation in Austin, Texas. I will, however, utilize my ethnographic data from Austin, Texas, tying together chapters one and two, by discussing the use of apocalyptic rhetoric and dystopian performatives in scene iconography and the content of its song texts. I will conclude by describing the way dystopian performatives work in shaping and inflecting the everyday lived experience of crusty crust punks.

The trope of the apocalypse is a performative; it does something in the world. J. L. Austin speaks of the performative utterance as one that *does* something (Austin 1975). I view apocalyptic rhetoric and dystopia as a performative concept in crust punk. The dystopian performative in crust punk performances, through the ensemble of signs, allows the reframing of the world as dystopic/dystopian for crust punks and crusty crust punks. As performance studies scholar Jill Dolan explains, "as a performative, performance itself becomes a "doing" in linguistic philosopher J.L. Austin's sense of the term, something that in its enunciation *acts* — that is, performs an action as tangible and effective as saying 'I do' in a wedding ceremony" (Dolan 2005, 5). Both Dolan's

concept of utopian performatives and my theory of dystopian performatives extend Austin's notion of performative utterances. In doing so, performatives become those moments in performance(s) and the ensemble of signs that both do something in the world and enable interpretations of the world.

In her book *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theater* (2005) Dolan theorizes what she calls the "utopian performative." "Utopian performatives describe small but profound moments in which performance calls the attention of the audience in a way that lifts everyone slightly above the present, into a hopeful feeling of what the world might be like if every moment of our lives were as emotionally voluminous, generous, aesthetically striking, and intersubjectively intense" (5). To operationalize what she means by utopian performatives, Dolan offers detailed discussions of moments as both an audience member and performer. The moments of which she speaks bridge the gap between performer and audience, performer and performer and individual members of the audience. What is unique about the utopian performative is that, "in their doings, [they] make palpable an affective vision of how the world might be better" (6). It is through affective work that performatives reveal possibilities of interpreting the world in the present and future as utopian or dystopian.

Dolan posits that "utopian performatives spring from a complex alchemy of form and content, context and location, which take shape in moments of utopia as doings, as process, as never finished gestures toward a potentially better future" (8). I would argue that in crust punk, dystopian performatives take place in moments of dystopia as doings, and through the trope of the apocalypse as process. For Dolan, "thinking of utopia as

processual, as an index to the possible, to the “what if,” rather than a more restrictive, finite image of the “what should be,” allows performance a hopeful cast, one that can experiment with the possibilities of the future in ways that shine back usefully on a present that’s always, itself, in process” (13). Similarly, I treat dystopia as processual, “as an index to the possible” that both points to an imagined future and to the present that is “always, itself, in process” (13). The trope of the apocalypse can be interpreted as an embodiment of praxis as conceptualized by Marx and eloquently defined by Madison as, “the creation of alternative ways of being and courageous engagement with the world in order to change it” (2012, 67). The only difference between Madison’s definition of praxis and the ways in which crust punks, in relation to the trope of the apocalypse, embody it is the lack of necessary “engagement with the world in order to change it” (67). Instead, crust punks feel all they need to do is be patient and wait, as the world will enforce the necessary change, allowing them the opportunity to bring their “alternative ways of being” to the cultural fore in a post-apocalyptic environment (67).

To be clear, dystopian performatives allow the interpretation of the past, present, and future as dystopic. The apocalypse becomes both the dystopian present currently in progress as well as an inevitable moment in the future. Not only do crust punks interpret the present as dystopian and envision a post-apocalyptic future, but also prefigure the post-post-apocalyptic as a moment filled with utopian possibility. This process, from present to post-apocalypse to post-post-apocalypse affects everything in crust punk ranging from the physical, embodied, everyday experiences to the ideological and political imperatives displayed by crust punks and especially crusty crust punks.

It is within this complex discourse of the apocalypse and dystopian performatives in crust punk imaginaries that it is possible to see how it is both created and recreated in crust punk performance. Charles Taylor defines the social imaginary as: "... the way ordinary people "imagine" their social surroundings, and this is often not expressed in theoretical terms; it is carried in images, stories, and legends. But it is also the case that theory is usually the possession of a small minority, whereas what is interesting in the social imaginary is that it is shared by large groups of people, if not the whole society...the social imaginary is that common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy" (2002, 106). Through music, lyrics, "images, stories, and legends" crust punks and crusty crust punks carry the apocalypse and dystopian performatives that allow them to imagine the world as apocalyptic and dystopic. I use the term "imaginaries" as opposed to Taylor's singular "imaginary" to highlight the simultaneous multiplicity of experience(s) within the crust punk scene. My discussion in chapter two parsed the differences between crust punks and crusty crust punks. It is not hard to conceive of multiple imaginaries, informed by a plethora of similar, yet affectively and physically distinct, structures of feeling that inflect crust punk (or crusty crust punk) imaginaries.

Crust punk social imaginaries are organized by concomitant structures of feelings. Raymond Williams describes a structure of feeling as "a fusion of the objective and the subjective; it is 'as firm and definite as 'structure' suggests' even though it is 'based in the deepest and often least tangible elements of our experience' (Williams 1969, 18 in Savran 2012, 4). Building on Williams' work, David Savran (2012)

discusses the way in which jazz in the 1920s “represented far more than a new musical style. For the producers and consumers of culture, jazz was the portal to a new world. And that, “[j]azz functioned...as a force around which coalesced...a structure of feeling” (4). So too, crust punk music and culture exists both within a contemporary structure of feeling, while simultaneously creating crust punk structures of feeling within which operate sets of crust punk (and crusty crust punk and/or crusty) social imaginaries. Again, I use the terms “structures” of “feelings” to highlight the multiple structures at work in both the larger working-class American and British cultures and the structures at play in the plethora of local and global crust punk scenes. This is not to say that I could not, to use Gayatri Spivak’s (1999) term, “strategically essentialize” this concept into a singular “structure” of (crusty crust and) crust punk feeling. However, because I have already placed emphasis on the differences between crust punks and crusty crust punks within the scene, I believe it would be an oversimplification to refer to just one structure of feeling or imaginary in crust punk writ large. For example, the apocalypse and the dystopian performative are both a part of crust punk and crusty crust punk experience. However, the work that the apocalypse and dystopian performatives do changes depending on perspective (either crust punk or crusty crust punk). To reinforce this I refer back to the example from chapter two of crust punk authenticity as distinct from class status outside the scene. It is possible to envision differing structures of feelings existing as a middle-class fan of crust punk as opposed to a working-class crust punk fan. Similarly, a working-class crust punk does not necessarily possess the same crust imaginary as a crusty crust punk. Dystopian performatives and apocalyptic rhetoric

create and reinforce both structures of feelings and imaginaries in and around the crust punk scene.

Apocalyptic discourse and dystopian performatives shape crust punk structures of feelings and inform social imaginaries. In his book *Arguing the Apocalypse* Stephen O’Leary examines apocalyptic discourse, identifying it as a means for “societies to define and address the problem of evil” (O’Leary 1994). The evils that crust punk focuses upon are capitalism, pollution, as well as human and animal rights violations. O’Leary gives us the foundation for a theory of apocalypse in three topoi, or common themes across apocalyptic discourses: time, evil, and authority (1994). Time in crust punk imaginary can be thought to stand still, in that nuclear Armageddon is always and already prefigured in existence. Evil is an *mélange* of cumulative factors that, like nuclear destruction, will bring certain end to the present world in which we live. Authority in crust punk apocalyptic rhetoric is built upon history, the trope of the apocalypse has no authority except in the collective memory of crust punk stemming from themes of nuclear Armageddon as identified in anarcho-punk. Thinking about crust punk in these terms helps to identify where it is coming from, its present state of affairs, and its future trajectory in the minds of crust punks and crusty crust punks.

Themes in chapter one and two contribute directly to the conversation of apocalyptic rhetoric in this chapter. A defining characteristic of anarcho-punk is anti-war, anarchist, and anti-capitalist rhetoric in lyrics and iconography. Stemming from the theme of nuclear holocaust, as found in early anarcho-punk, the trope of the apocalypse has become central in crust punk. Early precursors to crust punk, such as Crass and Flux

of Pink Indians, played upon popular fears from Cold War nuclear assault, particularly in the United Kingdom. Later, crust punk bands in both Britain and the United States used similar apocalyptic rhetoric to express concerns, not just about nuclear devastation, but also, environmental destruction, famine, suburban sprawl, and dystopic urban environments seemingly filled with concrete, decay, and the inhumanity inherently associated with the modern condition. The apocalypse imbues everything from the sound of the music, lyrical content, iconography, and fashion, to structures of feeling, and imaginaries in crust punk.

Malcolm “Scruffy” Lewty of the band Hellbastard expressed his feelings toward urban dystopia and the positioning of crust punk as a “primitive” “rural” other against the industrialized concrete cityscape in an interview featured in *Trapped in a Scene* (Glasper 2009). “The whole ethos of Hellbastard was – is – about the countryside. The whole message from day one was Green...we *hated* London” (187). Similarly, while discussing the lyrics for the Hellbastard song “Outside Claustrophobia” (from the 1986 album *Rippercrust*) Lewty describes his view of the city: “I don’t just see a city when I visit London, I see the homeless in the alleyways, the used syringes in the gutters - I see between the cracks. And I feel hemmed in even when I’m outside” (187). This quote brings up several dichotomous relationships that construct crust punk imaginaries as “other” to a “mainstream” culture. The dichotomies at work in crust punk include dystopia/utopia, rural/urban, primitive/modern, social collapse/progress, and the apocalypse as both on-going mass destruction and the prophecy of inevitable annihilation.

Apocalyptic Rhetoric and Dystopian Performatives in Crust Punk Culture

The trope of the apocalypse figures prominently in crust punk music and culture. In my initial research I identified, and briefly examined, apocalyptic discourse in the online forum *Organize and Arise*. I examined how, in that forum, there was a penchant for apocalyptic themes as exhibited in the discussion of the warning/hoping for the coming of it, and in the display of crust punk iconography.

Crust punk enters a popular cultural terrain crowded with apocalypses. Many Hollywood movies portray the apocalypse, doomsday, Armageddon, or the end-of-days. Just a few of the films that readily come to mind are *Mad Max*, *The Road Warrior*, *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome*, *The Postman*, *Waterworld*, *28 Days Later*, *28 Weeks Later*, and *I am Legend*. In these films, many of them horror movies, zombie movies, or vague portrayals of a post-apocalypse world, the remnants of survivors and what is left of society soldier forward, always in a suspended state of post-apocalyptic dystopia. In these films and in the collective imaginary of crust punk, dystopia, the opposite of utopia, is portrayed as poverty stricken, primitive, violent, often environmentally polluted, and run by a corrupt few with absolute power. Dolan recognized that “[u]topian performatives exceed the content of a play or performance” and that “spectators might draw a utopian performative from even the most dystopian theatrical universe” (Dolan 2005, 8). The dystopian performative in crust punk enables the interpretation of both the present moment as dystopic while simultaneously creating hope for a utopian post-post-apocalypse. The crust punk imaginary does not only exist in the aftermath of the apocalypse. Rather, crust punks feel we already live in a dystopian

society, however, without the burden of a crumbled infrastructure. The apocalypse is not a future event it is the eventful present, those present moments full of eventful possibilities. The apocalypse is both an inevitable future fraught with destruction, but also the everyday for many crust punks. Similar to Dolan's concept of utopia as process, dystopian performatives and the trope of the apocalypse offer hope in the aftermath of destruction. So, while the future may be dystopic, there is greater hope that change can occur in the post-apocalyptic future, as opposed to the current dystopian society, which can and will only end through the coming of the apocalypse.

For some crust punk bands apocalyptic themes are so important that their music is categorized specifically as "apocalyptic crust." They often employ a slightly different aural landscape and offer slightly different messages in their song texts. The theme that a majority of these bands revolve around is the idea that the human race, in its consistent embracement of warmongering, will bring about the end of society, enabling an opportunity to reestablish a new political and cultural landscape.

The trope of the apocalypse is found in both crust punk music and lyrics, and it serves a dialogic function in the music scene. It both presents and represents aspects of the apocalypse and dystopia. As Dolan explains, "the very present-tenseness of performance [concert or recording] lets audiences [listeners] imagine utopia not as some idea of future perfection that might never arrive, but as brief enactments of the possibilities of a process that starts now, in this moment" (2005, 17). So too, crust punk performances happen in present moments, enabling the interpretation of the current moment as dystopic, as well as the imagining of the coming apocalypse. In continuous

exposure to crust punk music listeners repeatedly experience that moment, “brief enactments” that are reified every time they attend a concert or listen to a CD, tape, or mp3.

Sounds of the Apocalypse

Crust punk sounds dirty; the aesthetic is bass-heavy, overly distorted, and centered on the repetition of minor modes and simple chords, giving the music a morbid and uncompromising quality. This is similar in many ways to the ideas of post-apocalyptic landscapes and dystopian society/culture. The dirty, uncompromising sounds of crust punk reflect and present/represent both the process of destruction and the before/after event of the apocalypse. Take, for example, Stormcrow’s “Enslaved in Darkness,” (*Enslaved in Darkness* 2005) the opening chords give the impression of descending into a doom-laden abyss by outlining a descending minor triad from fifth, third, to root. This is followed by a rhythm played by the guitar and bass that seem to beckon the advancing of time and destructive forces, recalling the sound of militia troops’ boots marching on concrete. The opening phrases only lead to an even more chaotic verse/middle eight of blindingly fast, down-tuned guitars chugging along, creating a feeling of an aural maelstrom sucking in and spitting out chaos and devastation. The overly distorted, down-tuned guitars grind and rumble a blurred triplet pattern featuring an over-driven electric bass sound high in the mix. I imagine this as symbolic of industrial mechanized sounds, as if tanks themselves were rolling through your psyche, approaching, destroying, and leaving the apocalypse in their wake. Adding

to the effect are the guttural death metal vocals spewing forth a tale of apocalyptic horror. The lyrics are as follows:

“Nightmares won't come to end/Diseased flesh of man
Grinding gears silence screams/Millions of wasted dreams
Poison clouds block the sun/Apocalypse brought by everyone
Scorched Earth we left behind/Was a solution so hard to find?

Hills of dead lakes of blood/Millions trapped beneath the mud
Drowning in a sea of black/Mother Earth turned her back
Plagued by the terror age/It's us in a cage
Scorched Earth you left behind/Was a solution so hard to find?

Nightmares won't come to end /Diseased flesh of man
Grinding gears silence screams/Millions of wasted dreams
Poison clouds block the sun/Apocalypse brought by everyone
Scorched Earth we left behind/Was a solution so hard to find?”

In these lyrics there are all the themes I have previously outlined: violence, corruption, and pollution. The apocalypse is figured as an event that has happened while simultaneously depicting an ongoing affair. Lyrics speak of disease and horror without end, the grinding gears of statist militia, a ravaged environment, and the moral complicity of everyone. The song text reflects the idea of a dystopian past, present, and future. The line “nightmares won’t come to end” represents both a past apocalyptic event and the ongoing terror of apocalyptic dystopia. While the “scorched earth we left behind” expresses past, present, and future by figuring a past apocalyptic moment, the resulting dystopia, and the post-apocalypse now inhabited. The lyrics describe the “hills of dead” in “lakes of blood” as well as the “scorched earth” that was “left behind,” yet still a feature of the future/present of the “apocalypse brought by everyone.” In recalling Sarah Kane’s play *Blasted*, Dolan suggests, “while violent, dystopic, and nearly unwatchable on stage, [it] might still promote an experience of the utopian performative

in certain moments of production” (Dolan 2005, endnote 18, 174). Similarly, the moment produced by Stormcrow’s “Enslaved in Darkness” promotes a dystopian performative experience. By enabling the interpretation of the past, present, and future as dystopic, it allows for the future to simultaneously offer dystopic and utopic possibilities. It presents a horrific, violent, picture, while representing new opportunities for social change not realizable in the perceived dystopian present.

Visions of the Apocalypse

Apocalyptic elements are also observable in the iconography of crust punk. I am struck by the image of a particular Profane Existence back patch, a large cloth patch sown on the back of vests and jackets. The artwork on this patch is of a male punk and a female punk facing one another in front of a destroyed society. The backdrop is crumbling buildings, concrete, and rubble, and features a mushroom cloud in the very center. The irony in this image is that the two crust punks are holding a near dead flower in a clay pot; despite clearly depicting an apocalyptic moment, the caption reads, “I can only see a better world — built on the ashes of this one.” What I take away from this is that, in the face of destruction and dystopia, there is hope of renewal and utopia. Crust punk simultaneously proffers that both the present and future will be dystopian, but that the future offers a sort of tabula rasa. This tabula rasa of the post-apocalypse is preceded by dread and yet still filled with hope. However, this dystopian society has no chance of transformation until the dreaded apocalypse occurs. By enabling dystopic interpretations of the world, the trope of the apocalypse and dystopian performatives in crust punk necessarily prefigure a utopia, the positive against which can be measured the negative

of dystopia. Building on the work of Roland Schaer, Gregory Claeys, and Lymon Tower Sargent, Dolan points out that, "Utopias are generally oppositional in nature, reflecting, at the minimum, frustration with things as they are and the desire for a better life" (Schaer, Claeys & Sargent, 2002, p. 8; cited in Dolan, 2005, p. 38). The statement "I can only see a better world — built on the ashes of this one" reflects an oppositional dystopian stance of crust punks toward the world as it is, while concomitantly expressing utopian desires for a "better world." The inevitable dystopia that will ensue is imbued with a sense of hope and longing. So, the apocalypse is both revered and feared in crust punk culture. It will be the inevitable result of humankind's mistreatment of the environment and animals, as well as modern day government and corporate corruption, capitalist consumerism rampant with individualism, and hence a lack of community.

The post-apocalypse as tabula rasa can also be seen in the iconography of the *Organize and Arise* forum. The looming graphic of a bleak, gray, landscape devoid of human presence except for the battle flags that flank the *Organize and Arise* logo speaks to the dystopian society in the aftermath of Armageddon. It is an empty field, devoid of any substantial human construction or presence. It reflects the sentiments expressed by Lewty at the beginning of this chapter. By presenting a rural, (human) life-less environment lacking the corruption of urban centers, it constructs a frontier setting prime for a fresh start. Those images complement crust punk album art depicting images of burnt-out, crumbling urban settings, in which death looms large, and humanity's misgivings are fresh in the mind's eye. Scenes of the latter kind are ubiquitous. For example, Warvictim's cover art for *Until Man Exists No More* (2008) depicts a ruined

city street, bombs being dropped amidst rubble and skulls, a lone mother holding her dead baby, and, in the background, a mushroom cloud billowing from city center. Guns, barbed wire, and bombs spell out the inevitability of the apocalypse in war. Again, this can be seen as a warning about the inevitable down fall of humanity. Popular in crust punk media, the artwork of Jeremy (aka “Hush”) offers a glimpse into a dystopian future (Hughes 2010). Much of his artwork features, tribal, primitively clad “martial” punks. These punks fight with spears, and bows and arrows; they seem to emerge from the backdrop of war into a bleak yet hopeful new world. They imagine a world where cities and concrete have disappeared, a depiction perhaps of the reclaiming of the world by punks bent not on continuing the violence for violence sake but fighting for what is right, fighting for the imagined utopia rising from the ashes of the post-post-apocalypse.

Apocalyptic Style

So too the apocalypse can be seen in the way crust punks fashion their looks. Building on the work of Dick Hebdige (1979), I recognize the importance of the meaning of style in crust punk through the display of codes. While they share many features of broader punk rock culture, the adoption of a predominantly black, white, and gray color pallet, dreadlocks, utilitarian clothing, and items with a nostalgic tribal/primitive aesthetic sets them distinctly apart. This is where the visual imagery from Hollywood’s post-apocalyptic movies can be most readily seen. Crust punk fashion sense is built not upon the beautiful, ornate, or aesthetic, but the utilitarian, symbolic, and declamatory style seen in films such as *Mad Max*, *The Road Warrior*, and *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome*. It differentiates crust punks from other punks in the sense that

their physical appearance reinforces the fact that that they are enacting a kind of apocalypse of the everyday. Torn clothes, patches, dreadlocks, and use of found items reinforce the utilitarian nature of the aesthetic. Wearing all black clothing references, not just extreme metal culture, but all subcultures that tout themes of death, doom, peril, and otherness. It also harkens back to the all black uniform of the British anarcho-punk band Crass. Unlike Crass, however, crust punks literally wear their identities on their sleeves. T-shirts and patches cite their favorite bands, record labels, co-ops, and history. For instance, it has become stereotypical to see a crust punk with a Discharge patch somewhere on their clothing. This lets others in and out of the community know that they recognize the importance of non-crust punk bands (anarcho-punk precursors) in shaping their own subculture's sound, ideology, and rhetoric. These items become performative in their referentiality. In this way the fashion worn by crust punk scene members is both the iconographic representation of apocalyptic rhetoric and is also a dystopian performative—performative in the sense that wearing these clothes and seeing others dressed similarly affects crust punk imaginaries, creating dystopic presences and possibilities. It is through affect that dystopian performatives enable the interpretation of the past, present, and future as dystopian.

I had first hand experience with this in Austin, Texas at the Chaos in Tejas festival. Moving from venue to venue, my own sense of place and time constantly shifted according to the crowd present and what they were wearing. For example, moving from a small record store venue full of young people dressed mostly in cut-off denim shorts and light colored t-shirts to a crowded outdoor venue full of crust punks

wearing all black with post-apocalyptic accessories changed my reading of the affect of the performances happening in that venue. Likewise, it also affected my sense of time and place, giving the impression of moving between pre-apocalyptic, apocalyptic, and post-apocalyptic worlds. I felt as if I was no longer at a contemporary music venue but rather a post-apocalyptic trading post with a concrete façade, cold beer, and live music. The live performance operated concurrently with the other bodies in my surroundings enabling dystopian performatives, literally and figuratively affecting my sense of place and time. While bands sang anthems warning of the inevitable downfall of man by the wages of war, the crowd of crust punk and crusty crust punk audience members simultaneously enacted an apocalyptic turn that was both happening and had yet to occur.

Dystopian Performatives and Apocalyptic Imaginaries

Another important manifestation of the apocalypse in crust punk subculture is in the structures of feelings and the social imaginaries it creates and reinforces. In *Utopia in Performance*, Dolan shows that geography can break the performative, as when an audience reenters the world outside the theatre. She discusses the complexity of walking out into a brightly lit New York City street after a particularly moving show, and the negative impact this might have on the process of the utopian performative (2005). In her view, the utopian performative is halted the instant that an audience member leaves the theatre. Dolan's utopian performatives happen in sharply circumscribed moments, and while crust punk dystopian performatives also happen in such moments, they have greater life outside their initially brief enactments. Dystopian performatives enter into

the realm of performativity through the repeated everyday enactments of crust punks and crusty crust punks. I view all interaction with crust punk material culture and music as bearing witness to the dystopian performative of the apocalypse. Whether listening to a CD or attending a concert, the geography of the performance for crust punks is not separate from the geography of everyday life. Crust punks are continuously thrust into a dystopian world, whether as part of a performance or as part of their mundane existence. Evidence of this can be seen on the *Organize and Arise* discussion thread that emerged from guest member *Upper Crusty*'s post "i'm pretty excited about the apocolypse [sic]." An immediate response to this post highlights the sentiment of the community.

life_for_a_wage? says:

(09-08-2011 at 12:11 AM)

greedy parasite me-ist americans will suffer as they deserve. it'll be fend for yourself & they won't have someone wiping their asses for them!

Around my area (of Pennsylvania). There is lots of flooding going on. The fuckin street a half a block down from me was flooded yesterday, as was the Turkey Hill Experience parking lot across the street. Nearby towns & parts of the RT30 bypass was flooded.

And last week my town felt a slight earthquake. This shit doesn't usually happen around here!!! But I must admit, I'm far more excited than worried.

[signed]

Life is suddenly good again! [smiley face with thumbs up gif]

While other replies to *Upper Crusty*'s thread were mostly in response to weather events in a variety of areas around the United States, they are also performances of shared ideologies, exposing the underlying performative nature of the trope of the apocalypse as praxis in crust punk music and culture.

In crust punk culture, crusty crust punks are synonymous with homelessness, squatting, drinking, and anti-capitalism. All of these themes can be seen as an extension of the trope of the apocalypse. They are literally enacting personal post-apocalyptic performances of daily life in a perceived present day dystopian environment. Working a job would support the capitalist and corporate warmongers that, economically, environmentally, and politically, are the driving force behind inevitable downfall. They hold themselves morally responsible for the present and the future, which means not participating in a perceived failing system. Similarly, scavenging, squatting, and living in the parks, or on the streets of cities could be imagined as natural in the event of doomsday. They are enacting what life would be like during and after the apocalypse.

Crusty crust punks are often called drunk punks, because of their propensity for getting drunk and doing nothing most of the time. Refusal to work jobs, lacking many material goods, living in squats or on the streets, as well as begging and scavenging, all reflect one simple premise: why participate in a culture if it is doomed to be destroyed? If the apocalypse is inevitable because of the current socio-cultural climate, then what good will money, or cars, or fancy homes be when the world does end? By living the ways that they do, crusty crust punks both actively protest by rejection those things that are seen to lead to the apocalypse, while concurrently enacting apocalyptic dystopian

performatives.

Crusty Crust Punk Crustiness as Everyday Embodied Dystopia

I do not want to make the mistake of romanticizing my experiences with my crusty crust punk interlocutors. The discussion that follows is meant to illuminate the way that tropes of the apocalypse and the dystopian performative operates in the mundane practices and quotidian experiences of crusty crust punks, as distinct from those of the crust punks that I focus on above. I have repeatedly mentioned the importance of the lived experience of crust punks and crusty crust punks in affecting apocalyptic rhetoric and the dystopian performative. I have also tried to highlight the ways in which the dystopian performative and the trope of the apocalypse reinforces crust punk imaginaries that revolve around particular structures of feelings associated with the music culture. In the section that follows I will be focusing on the affective power of crustiness, of literally being a *crusty* crust punk, and the role of dystopian performatives and apocalyptic discourses in shaping those structures of feelings and social imaginaries.

Crusty crust punk imaginaries and the concomitant everyday performances became increasingly evident during my participant-observation in Austin, Texas. My time spent at the four day music festival Chaos in Tejas, and the three days I had the opportunity to get to know crusty crust punks while they waited at a hop-out, afforded me the embodied experiences necessary to understand the dystopian performatives at work in their everyday lives. Dolan points out that utopian performatives at work in audience members creates intersubjectivity among the participants in the event (2005).

The intersubjectivity I experienced in Austin happened in two different realms: the performance spaces of Chaos in Tejas and the time spent waiting at the hop-out with my crusty crust punk interlocutors. The differences in these two experiences could be likened to mundane and heightened forms of *communitas* (referred to as secular and sacred by Victor Turner (Turner 1969)). The feeling of intersubjectivity at multiple different performances during the festival was abstract (nonfigurative) and ephemeral. That experience stands in partial contrast to the intersubjectivity I experienced in the intimacy and affective potency of my time spent with the crusty crust punks. There was physicality inherent in both, but, during the three days spent under the overpass, my embodied knowledge affected my lived experience to a much more heightened degree.

In my experiences at the hop-out I existed in a liminal state of crossing-over to embody crusty crust punk dirtiness, hunger, dehydration, heat exhaustion and precarity. More than this, though, experiencing the mundane world of crusty crust punks became for me heightened compared to the familiarity of the festival setting, which was both comfortable and safe. The real risks and dangers of participating in crusty crust punk “mundane” practices heightened for me the differences between crust punks lived experiences and the crusty crust punk habitus. The precarious nature of everyday life for crusty crust punks negates concepts of “mundane” and “everyday,” since nothing can be taken for granted; their lives eradicate any sense of fixedness inherent to the notion of mundanity. Ever unfolding change, precarity, and transiency become the constants upon which crusty crust punk mundanity is based. Dolan (2005) focused heavily on the role of utopian performatives in a theatrical setting, how those moments created *communitas*

and the feeling of uplift that could then shape moments (however fleeting) outside the performance space. In contrast, I view the dystopian performative as existing equally in both realms, within the frame of performance as well as in the mundane world. This is an important difference, because I am not only arguing that utopian and dystopian performatives are inversions of one another but also for the expansion of utopian/dystopian performatives beyond a space framed solely by theatrical performance, an expansion that includes everyday lived experiences as well.

What struck me most about my time under the overpass with the crusty crust punks Olivia, Daniel, and Charlie was the inversion of public space. As homeless, train-hopping, transients, they experienced the space beneath the overpass as a “home” of sorts. It offered both a shaded refuge from the sweltering Texas summer sun and also a necessary space of proximity for the arrival of an unpredictable train ride out of the city. Nevertheless, it became a comfortable space in which my crusty interlocutors could retreat, away from the prying eyes of passersby and authorities. It was a welcoming open-air arena in which to converse, play, and store belongings. The space under the overpass felt hospitable compared to both the streets adjacent and above, as well as the surrounding businesses and shopping plazas, which increasingly represented a precarious space, both unwelcoming and dangerous. When I returned to this area, after having dropped off Olivia, Daniel, and Charlie the previous night, I felt as if I was trespassing. Not invading the crusty crust punk’s space, but literally trespassing in an area not meant for human habitation. (There were no signs posted referring to trespassing, and I am unsure if this location under the overpass was public property or

belonged to the train company.) Except for a few people who passed through on their way to housing across the tracks, and the “home bum” (stationary homeless person who made his permanent home there), the crusty crust punks and I were the only presence under the bridge. The only time any of us left this location was to relieve ourselves in nearby overgrowth, find food or water, buy alcohol, or when we attended the second warehouse show (discussed in the previous chapter). We avoided coming and going from that location because doing so meant that our presence could be detected. I had the distinct impression that our presence there was something of a secret, at least from local authorities. Additionally, any chance of not being present when the correct train passed through meant possibly being left behind by the others.

The employees and patrons of the closest businesses, a Burger King, tolerated our presence. Despite not being paying customers, the employees gave us free ice water and allowed the crusty crust punks to charge their phones inside, often to the chagrin of other clientele. An intersection nearby at which Olivia and Charlie had tried to panhandle at the stoplight was perhaps the most precarious space for us, aside from the shopping plaza featuring the grocery, dollar, and liquor store that we frequented for tobacco, food, water, and boxed wine. I only made one trip with Charlie to the grocery store to purchase wine, cigarettes, and rolling tobacco for Olivia. Despite his fraught economic position, Charlie offered to purchase the entire amount, two twelve-dollar boxes of wine. He also bought Olivia, his significant other at the time, rolling tobacco. I returned his offer with my own, to pay the full amount, but he would only agree to half the cost of the wine.

After two days under the bridge I had begun to acquire the patina of a crusty crust punk. The dust and dry, brown dirt under the overpass dirtied everything it touched —boots, pants, and shirts — while sticking to sweaty exposed arms, feet, and faces. Our clothing misshapen from sweat and wear, both Charlie and I appeared disheveled and filthy at the entrance to the grocers. Employees and patrons instantly took notice of us. As I casually walked into the establishment, Charlie’s quick, purposeful demeanor on the walk to the store instantly changed, his head down, shoulders hunched, he shuffled nervously to find the beer and wine aisle, avoiding eye contact and shirking the employee who approached asking if we needed assistance. Even at check out, he avoided eye contact with the cashier, gingerly fumbled the crumpled money to the counter, was careful not to touch the clerk, and responded in hushed murmurs to her mundane banter. Upon exiting the building his character returned. Once again in the open of the parking lot and street, Charlie’s pace quickened and posture straightened, and he assumed an air of confidence. Despite our recent score of supplies, he stopped at every garbage receptacle on our way back to the hop-out. He would swiftly rummage through the top layer of trash looking for something, anything, exhibiting the sort of desperation intrinsic to his way of life.

On our walk to and from the store we made conversation, and he inquired about my previous reference to apocalyptic rhetoric in crust punk. I tried to explain my theory as best I could in the moments as we had alone together. (He almost always waited until nobody else was around to fully engage in substantial conversation). I told him about my research, and he asked if it had anything to do with approaching Mayan calendar event

that December. I answered that it was related; I added that I was not necessarily interested in a prophesied event but rather how the apocalypse figured into crust punk lyrics and album covers. He seemed to think about this for a minute quietly, and then dropped the subject after mentioning how “cool” it would be if something like the Mayan calendar “end of the world” came true. Similar to the example given above discussing the exchange about apocalyptic events in the online forum *Organize and Arise*, this would be my only direct communication about the subject. On our walk back to the hop-out, I realized that it was not a lack of understanding or reflexivity that prompted his disengagement from our conversation about apocalyptic rhetoric but a lack of interest. For Charlie, an apocalypse had already happened.

Living on the fringes of society, scavenging, stealing, begging, and bartering had become the mundane, everyday techniques necessary to survive within Charlie’s dystopic mundane world. Nearly every action, from hustling about the streets, to panhandling, and stealing food, were the mundane dystopian performatives informing Olivia’s, Charlie’s and Daniel’s imaginary. Feeling more welcome under an overpass than in mainstream society provokes the affective power that fuels the performativity of the dystopian performative in crusty crust punk mundanity. The performances of precarity, filthiness, hunger, and transiency become the very dystopian performatives that structure crusty crust punk structures of feeling and mould apocalyptic imaginaries.

Conclusion

In sum, the trope of the apocalypse and dystopian performatives both are affectively enabled and coalesce around crust punk and crusty crust punk structures of

feelings and imaginaries. Dystopian performatives are brought to life in performance, both in moments framed as performance and in the performance in everyday life. Within those performances, it is the confluence of signs that enable dystopian performatives to affect interpretations of the world, creating and reinforcing apocalyptic and dystopian imaginaries. Almost anything in the world has the possibility of being read as a dystopian performative. For crust punks and crusty crust punks, the sound of the music, lyrics, iconography, style, and everyday lived experiences all work together to form structures of feeling that both present and represent dystopian performative possibilities. Emerging from anti-war rhetoric in anarcho-punk, crust punk apocalyptic rhetoric retained an element of referentiality, while expanding upon apocalyptic themes bringing forth multivalent equivalencies, enabling apocalyptic and dystopian performative potentialities. Dystopian performatives in their affective potency prefigure an apocalypse that has at once happened, is currently happening, and is going to happen. Those moment, past, present, and future, emerge both through the process of performance and as the apocalypse as praxis; a process that provides for both dystopian and utopian contingencies. Dystopian performatives materialize in moments of *communitas*, while concomitantly calling into existence such moments, producing an intense intersubjectivity among them, which further informs crust punk and crusty crust punk imaginaries. Apocalyptic imaginaries influence and are influenced by crust punk and crusty crust punk structures of feelings invoked by dystopian performatives.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Despite differences in crust punk and crusty crust punk structures of feelings and imaginaries, apocalyptic rhetoric and dystopian performatives create a through line for understanding the diversity of expressive resources, song texts, iconography, style, and identities within the scene. Crust punk music incorporates a wide range of expressive techniques, disparate song texts, iconographic images, and styles. In doing so, it can be hard for those outside the scene to make sense of how and why crust punk is considered a legitimate genre and style. Likewise, due to the discourse of disavowal within the scene, it would be easy to dismiss crust punk as a product of a bygone era, something that existed only in the 1980s and early 90s. By examining the use of apocalyptic rhetoric and the role of dystopian performatives I have been able to assemble coherent concepts of crust punk as a genre, a scene, and a set of discourses.

Crust punk's musical genealogy is an important aspect in the scene, giving members a way to express differences and similarities with other genres, scenes, and styles. In crust punk rhetoric and ideology, themes of anti-war, anti-capitalism, and anarchism are carried over from anarcho-punk. Expressive resources in early crust punk combined the politically overt rhetoric of anarcho-punk bands Crass, Flux of Pink Indians, and Discharge with heavy metal sounds and techniques, inspired by Motörhead, Venom, and Hellhammer. As British hardcore punk and heavy metal expressive resources progressed, so too did the sound of crust punk bands in the United Kingdom. Crust punk's transatlantic journey presented new avenues for development in American

bands such as Nausea and Misery. By the 1990s crust punk expressive resources included heavy metal, thrash metal, hardcore punk, grindcore, death metal, and eventually black metal.

Expanding musical resources notwithstanding, crust punk bands maintained anarchist ideologies that were articulated through apocalyptic rhetoric. The development from explicit anarchist rhetorics to multivalent song texts that centered on the apocalypse enabled dystopian performatives to emerge in crust punk that were not present in anarcho-punk or heavy metal. The crystallization of crust punk as a distinct musical genre created the split between crust punk rhetorics and crusty crust punk ways of life. While both crust punk and crusty crust punk identities are tied to crust punk music, the establishment of a crust punk scene associated with a musical genre allowed scene members to divorce the rhetoric in song texts from the authenticating lifestyles of earlier crust punk bands associated with squatting and homelessness. In other words, with the crystallization of crust punk as a genre, differing groups of listeners became attracted to the music — some living full fledged crusty lifestyles and others merely attracted to those lifestyles and the apocalyptic ideology associated with it. In this context, the discourse of authenticity within crust punk becomes complicated by the myriad attributes that are read as authentic. This has led to the disavowal of authenticity and claiming of authentic identity within the crust punk scene by crust punks and crusty crust punks alike. As I observed in Austin, the disavowal of crust punk identity is inextricably linked to discourses of denial of authenticity. Disavowal is the expression of both anti-authoritative anarchist ideologies as well as anxiety within the scene

surrounding the definition of authenticity. Regardless of a discourse of disavowal of identity and authenticity within the crust punk scene, there are clear markers that can be read and mapped by outsiders (and insiders alike). One such marker is the trope of the apocalypse, which is featured in crust punk rhetoric, iconography, and style, and is an important part of crust punk and crusty crust punk identity and authenticity.

The trope of the apocalypse and dystopian performatives are the keys to understanding crust punk (and crusty crust punk) expressive resources, identities, discourses of authenticity, as well as structures of feelings and social imaginaries. The performance of crust punk and crusty crust punk identities (and the disavowal of those identities) take place within structures of feelings and social imaginaries that prefigure apocalyptic endings alongside dystopian performatives that enable the interpretation of the world around them as dystopic. The performance of crust punk identity (and the disavowal of authentic identities) become performative within the scene, allowing the interpretation of the world and others within that world as being of, and living in, an ever unfolding apocalyptic dystopia. The use of apocalyptic rhetoric, iconography, and style becomes the performative operation around which a coherent scene is constructed (despite the disavowal of crust identity or thereby association with a scene).

This thesis represents a beginning to understanding the complex issues in the crust punk scene. It is my hope that this work will supply other scholars with the means by which to approach and discuss an as of yet understudied musical genre, scene, and culture. Similarly, this project should be seen as an inroad into the examination of a distinct set of structures of feelings and social imaginaries associated with and

surrounding a unique music culture. When I started this research my goal was to interrogate the relationship between crust punk music and activist behaviors associated with the subculture. I believe this thesis uncovers the basis for activist behaviors by identifying the possible inspirations behind myriad crust punk and crusty crust punk interventions in mainstream culture and society. By enabling dystopian interpretations of the world as it was, as it is, as well as how it might be, the trope of the apocalypse and dystopian performatives expose the possibilities for activist interventions. Those interventions are based upon the formulation of apocalyptic instances that are at once ongoing, as well as perceived as an inevitable moment. Dystopian performatives allow for the interpretation of the world as dystopic while creating the need and hope for utopian future possibilities.

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