

Feeling Pain/Making Kin in the Brooklyn Noise Music Scene

David Farrow

I wish I was beautiful and become something you live for
But I see this monster in their eyes
I wish I was beautiful and become something you live for
Goodbye y'all rest in peace DIY¹

Hanging up the phone on their father, Snug tells me, “He shouldn’t be worried. I’ve been going to parties and shows since I was 15, but he treats me like a child.” To Snug, I am a stranger who happened to sit next to them after a show at the Queens venue Trans-Pecos. Covered in bracelets and adorned with a foxtail, Snug’s frustration with their father’s call is palpable, but why did they confide in me?

Fifteen minutes prior, Snug and I moshed to the electronic punk act Deli Girls with no knowledge of each other’s existence. The bruises from my collisions with other bodies still fresh on my skin, I am thrust into an intimate conversation concerning family with a stranger.

In this article, I theorize the animating role pain in mosh pits plays in community formation in the Brooklyn Do-It-Yourself (DIY) noise music scene. Pain initiates social connections that extend beyond performance to emotional and financial support. While pain unites noise music communities, the pain experienced by long-term Hispanic and Black communities when losing homes and communities in the same neighborhoods in which performances occur fails to breach venues’ walls. The complicity of arts communities in gentrification means DIY scenes and venues contribute to the gentrification of these neighborhoods despite their inclusive, political commitments. At the same time, DIY communities differ from subcultures through building queer kinships that can be mobilized to support queer life and to resist artist-led gentrification. To conclude, I consider how queer kinship within the noise music scene circulates grief and support following the sudden death of digital punk band Love Spread’s multi-instrumentalist Ryota Machida.

While there are aesthetic differences between all artists discussed, the overarching terms “mutant” and “noise” have emerged within the scene as signifiers of a “break from normative social contexts,” serving as an “antisubject of culture” that deploys the negative connotations of noise as a sense of communal identity (Novak 2015, 130,133). Interestingly, this

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characterization of noise resonates with the destabilizing potential ascribed to queerness. Queerness, whether related to gender, sexuality, or non-normative socialities, exposes the “unity” ascribed to identity (male/female, heterosexuality, ‘traditional’ family structure) as regulatory fictions which are naturalized in order to maintain heterosexual, patriarchal, binary gendered, settler colonial, racial, and classed hierarchies (Butler 1990, 43).

Although many noise artists discussed identify as queer, non-binary, and/or trans, I do not seek to define a genre of “DIY queer noise music,” but instead, following Ana María Ochoa Gautier, to examine DIY, queerness, and noise “as distributive and multiple, as emphasizing relations of exteriority and change rather than unity” (Ochoa Gautier 2014, 66). Within the Brooklyn noise scene, queerness expresses itself through sexuality, non-binary gender identity, non-normative lifestyles, and aesthetics in always changing ways. Queerness, noise, and DIY are constituted through breaks from normativity such that persons can experience different ways of being and relating to one another. At the same time, as relations defined by “exteriority and change,” DIY exists in tension with long-term working class and racial communities. The artistic community it encapsulates has been thoroughly weaponized within gentrification, leading to the loss of family homes within Hispanic and Black neighborhoods.

While artists themselves live precarious lives due to low incomes, marginalized racial and gender identities and sexualities, the “immanent dependencies” in which artists come to rely on one another must not contribute to the pain of oppressed urban communities (Povinelli 2006, 25). The proliferation of real estate capital and pro-gentrification urban planning in New York City means not every precarious life is valued the same. As relations of necessity, ways in which communities respond to their own marginalization, queer kinship’s radical potential resides in rethinking community itself within Brooklyn DIY, severing its relation to gentrification, and politicizing the relationships made in the mosh pit and on the dance floor.

What ‘DIY’ Is (And Isn’t)

I am at The Glove, a Do-It-Yourself venue on the border between the Bedford-Stuyvesant and Bushwick neighborhoods in Brooklyn, to see harsh noise artist Channel 63. Channel 63’s performance, an imposing wall of computer-generated noise accompanied by drowned out shouts, fades into Love Spread. I watch Love Spread whip the 20-30 bodies ambling around The Glove into a furious torrent with their Japanese pop and digital-punk hybrid. They are mutants of the highest degree. As member

Ryota Machida dives into the crowd, the spaces between us disappear.

Both the venue The Glove and the artists performing that night are committed to DIY as an ethical disposition and practice of community organizing. American DIY emerged in the 1980s independent rock and punk scene as an “ideology and practice” of cultural production that strived for a sense of social autonomy from oppressive hierarchical structures and aesthetic autonomy from the music industry (Pearson 2018, 47). DIY situates self-sufficiency and autonomy as central aspects of creative life. Glove co-founder Lily Chambers emphasizes these characteristics in a formal interview when asked why she preferred ‘DIY’ to ‘artist-run’ when referring to The Glove:

Like ‘artist run’—to me, that’s lovely. I also think ‘Do It Yourself’ is a bit more aggressive and I think people should be thinking that way. After doing it myself for so long, then it’s just like, “Now it’s your turn, buddy.” And it’s also like someone can say like, “Artist run spaces are over.” But, you can’t really say DIY is over. As long as you can do stuff, you *can* still do stuff.

Lily’s celebration of the aggressive character of DIY syncs with the political commitments of DIY spaces. The zine *Building: A DIY guide to Creating Space, Hosting Events and Fostering Radical Community* similarly defines DIY as an ethics concerned with “taking direct action to live independently from capitalist society” as to foster “control over our own lives” (Campau, 2002). As an organizational practice within underground music and art communities, DIY reflects a conscious commitment to building spaces where “everyone feels supported” (2002).

DIY venues often exist outside of the formal club and bar scene, lacking liquor licenses, building code compliances, and approval by city agencies. The absence of public addresses insulates venues from police and health and safety monitoring. At the same time, the necessity of asking someone for the address is an intentional or unintentional screening process. Organizers filter potential artists and attendees to create “autonomous and safe(r) spaces” for people of marginalized identities while simultaneously making “assessments about who to program at their shows and accept into their spaces” (Verbuč 2017, 297). Safer space policies attempt to fix for the privileging of white, male counterculture within the DIY scene; however, this vetting process can render DIY shows and venues “unintentionally exclusive” by limiting access to people already aware of the DIY scene (2017, 296).

In this section, I trace the tension between the inclusive political commitments of DIY spaces and exclusionary implications of their existence

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in low-income, racialized neighborhoods. Focusing on two venues, the Silent Barn and Trans-Pecos, which both transitioned from informal and illegal spaces to code-compliant venues, I examine how racially motivated neighborhood divestment and the socioeconomic valuation of artists over marginalized racial groups serve as the material conditions for DIY venues' emergence in Brooklyn and Queens. These material conditions cannot be separated from Deli Girl's performance at Trans-Pecos detailed in the next section; in turn, the performance cannot exist without the structural conditions guaranteeing the venue's existence.

Throughout the twentieth century, Brooklyn was a patchwork of different racial and ethnic communities. In the wake of post-industrialism, Brooklyn saw an influx of black Southerners and Mexican and Puerto Rican immigrants throughout the 1960s. Paired with white flight from New York City as a whole, Brooklyn neighborhoods were increasingly identified by racial composition: ethnic white and Puerto Rican communities in Williamsburg, Hispanic communities in Bushwick, and Black communities in Bedford-Stuyvesant (Valli 2015, 1197; Zukin 2009, 42). This prompted racially motivated disinvestment by the city government and capital, ongoing discrimination in loan accessibility as the result of red-lining, and neglect if not outright sabotage of properties by landlords resulted in deteriorating living conditions for residents and falling property values throughout the City during the 1960s and 70s (Calvente 2017, 127-128).

In Manhattan's Lower East Side, widescale disinvestment translated to low cost living, working, and performing spaces for artists, musicians, and bohemians throughout the 60s and 70s. Artists' growing presence in the Lower East Side was coextensive with increasing speculative investments as landlords "*anticipated* consumption of apartments by 'upscale urbanities'" thanks to middle-class development of surrounding neighborhoods, increased availability of capital for speculation as the result of the stock market boom, and "the symbolic representation of the East Village as an alluring arts district" (Mele 2000, 223). While the population of the Lower East Side decreased by thirty percent between 1970-1980, rents increased between 128 percent and 172 percent (Smith 1996, 196). Real estate developers, landlords, and city planners successfully transformed the cultural capital of artists into an engine for the gentrification of the Lower East Side throughout the 1970s, 80s, and 90s.

By the 1990s, artists found themselves priced out of Manhattan, initiating a mass migration into Williamsburg. Urban development had not yet begun in earnest in Williamsburg as the neighborhood was perceived as "nonwhite, low-income, and underutilized" (Mahmoud 2014, 103).

The low-cost, post-industrial spaces along the waterfront greeted artists with spacious lofts and warehouses in which they could live relatively low-cost artistic lives while organizing noisy concerts and expansive art installations (Zukin and Braslow 2011, 398). Viewing Williamsburg (and soon Bushwick) as “frontiers,” the artists of the 1990s and early 2000s imagined these neighborhoods as “a peripheral urban area with “new” and cheap space, “ripe” for artistic imagination, occupation, and enterprise” (Mahmoud 2014, 100). Often ignoring the nonwhite and poor populations already living and making community in these neighborhoods, artists channeled their creativity into building new communities to uplift their surroundings.

Among those attracted to the area was Todd Patrick. In 2001, Patrick settled in Brooklyn after moving from Portland, Oregon. He soon began booking DIY shows in non-traditional spaces such as “parking lots, store-fronts, church basements, and construction sites” in addition to friends’ lofts and warehouses (Leckert 2015, 209). Patrick founded his own short-lived DIY venue Llano Estacado in 2004 before establishing the more successful Monster Island Basement along the Williamsburg waterfront (Lewis 2016). Throughout the early 2000s, Patrick, other DIY venue operators, and adjacent art scenes transformed Williamsburg and Brooklyn more generally into an alluring destination for creatives and real estate developers (Goodman 2017, 307-310; Zukin 2009).

Running on shoestring budgets and haunted by the possibility of crackdowns on code compliance, DIY venues have short lifespans. This temporariness renders DIY venues “an intermediary, second-best option for vacant urban space *in the absence of other development options*, or as a prelude to more profitable ventures to be launched by the initial users themselves or by external investors” (Columb 2012, 141). As temporary occupations of space, DIY venues generate value through expanding the cultural capital of a neighborhood, widening “the *value gap* between the income they generate as rental properties and their potential sale price” (Stein 2019, 50).

As the perceived value of a property increases, the financial incentive for landlords to remove less profitable tenants grows. Patrick notes his awareness of this phenomenon, telling *Deli Magazine* in 2005 that the building housing Llano Estacado was previously another art and performance space before “our landlord bought it, and then some other buildings, I think with the goal of turning them into high-rises” once the area was rezoned for residential properties (Yuan 2005). Following the 2005 rezoning of 170 blocks in Williamsburg, many of the industrial spaces previously utilized by artists transformed into profitable real estate investments

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for landlords (Zukin 2009, 58-59; Mahmoud 2014, 108-109). As a result, between 2005 and 2015, rent increases, evictions, and changes to the socio-economic makeup of Williamsburg decreased the Hispanic population by 22% (Stabrowski 2015, 1121). Tenant organizers further found “an increase in illegal evictions, landlord harassment, rent overcharge cases and landlords withdrawing their apartments from rent stabilization” (1121). These events coalesce in gentrification, a racial capitalist structure that rationalizes the violent displacement of racial minorities and working-class people through redevelopment and profit seeking (Smith 1996, 22).

City government and landlords consciously outsourced the labor of urban development to DIY venues and other artist communities. Through remaking the perception of Williamsburg, artists attracted restaurants, bars, and business who then catered to a professional class willing to pay higher rents (Zukin and Braslow 2011, 133-135). Soon enough, rezoning, reinvestment by landlords, and a rising cost of living priced artists and venues out of Williamsburg during the late 2000s and early 2010s, with Todd Patrick’s Monster Island Basement closing in 2011 and his next Williamsburg venue, 285 Kent, only lasting between 2010 and 2014 (Leckert 2015, 209).

The decampment of DIY from Williamsburg pushed the urban frontier deeper into Brooklyn and Queens. In 2004, the DIY venue the Silent Barn traced the outer limits of artistic expansion into Ridgewood, a Queens neighborhood bordering Brooklyn’s Bushwick neighborhood. Patrick joined the Silent Barn collective in 2007, helping run the space while continuing to host DIY parties throughout Brooklyn. The Silent Barn operated between 2004-2011 before being shut down by the Department of Buildings. After raising \$40,000 from Kickstarter, members of the original Silent Barn founded a second, code compliant Silent Barn in Bushwick in 2012. During this same period, Patrick and musician Sam Hillmer founded Trans-Pecos as a code compliant venue in the original Silent Barn’s space in Ridgewood, opening the venue in December 2013.

The Silent Barn and Trans Pecos emerged along the bleeding edge of gentrification in Bushwick and Ridgewood. At the same time, they represent different continuations of DIY ethos. The Silent Barn consciously oriented itself within intersectional feminist and anarchistic traditions through “a nonhierarchical, collective structure inspired by Occupy Wall Street” whereas Trans-Pecos pursues financial stability through operating as an avant-garde venue in the tradition of Tonic and the Knitting Factory (Pelly 2018).

While artists and DIY spaces strive to be inclusive and socially conscious, their presence is painfully felt by long-term residents as the devalu-

ing of existing communities. Rosa, a 26-year-old social worker and college student born in Bushwick to Dominican parents, expresses frustration surrounding this reality in an interview with geographer Chiara Valli:

I'm losing my home because I don't make enough to live here. Because there are people who looked different than me, who have more money, and supposedly put more value just by *who* they are. What I am is not valuable enough. I don't mean shit. That's what makes people so angry (2015, 1204).

Rosa's "sense of anger and frustration" reflects the structural valuation of artists and cultural producers by capital and city government over the lives of long-term residents (1204). By remaking the perception of a neighborhood, DIY spaces unwittingly serve as "place[s] for cool cultural consumption [...] which then sparks a commercial revival, a residential influx of people with money, and, finally, the building of new luxury apartments with extravagant rents" (Zukin 2009, 37).

In this way, the discursive commitment to inclusiveness and openness at DIY venues rings as false to long-term residents. Patrick stresses that Trans-Pecos functions as a community space through hosting non-profit groups, schools, the local precinct, and disability services (Koslow 2015). The Silent Barn similarly emphasized its partnership with Educated Little Monsters, a youth-centered music education group operated by and catering to longtime Bushwick residents and their children (Silent Barn 2018). While these efforts are valuable, Valli's ethnographic research in Bushwick notes "long-time residents tend to feel uncomfortable in new businesses not only because of the kind of services offered and their prices, but also because they feel 'other' from the people who frequent those establishment" (1201). The venues do not *feel like* part of their community.

As an embodied process, gentrification reworks visual landscapes and soundscapes for long-term residents, reorganizing the senses to make home *feel* different. Sensory experience entails that "experiencing and knowing place—the idea of place as sensed, place as sensation—can proceed through a complex interplay of the auditory and the visual, as well as through other intersensory perceptual processes" (Feld 1996, 98). Sensory experience and place are co-constitutive, as place structures sensory experience and sensory experience contours place.

DIY venues condition the emergence of community through distinct visual, sonic, and haptic experiences that were not found within the neighborhood. Silent Barn collective member and journalist Jenn Pelly speaks to this, noting, "spaces like Silent Barn, with their radical openness, facilitate the process of locating a sense of purpose around music, in small groups of

outsiders, in real time” (2018). DIY community within Brooklyn emerges from the network of DIY venues frequented by artists and art patrons bound together by, as Pelly puts it, “the process of locating a sense of purpose around music.”

The problem emerges when people step outside the venue into a very different landscape and soundscape. The aesthetic autonomy found within a DIY venue separates the venues from their neighborhoods not because of a lack of commitment to inclusivity, but because of the structural valuation of artist’s autonomy over long-term residents’ community. As Pelly notes, the Silent Barn’s residents were, by 2018, primarily “queer, trans, nonbinary, and young,” the programming handled “by a team of women and nonbinary bookers,” and the venue consistently raised money for social justice efforts. Such efforts are essential to diversifying DIY, but they fail to solve for the ongoing instrumentalization of arts communities for gentrification. As the Silent Barn asks in the statement concerning its shutdown in 2018, “How can we responsibly serve a neighborhood while contributing to its rapid gentrification?”

The closure of the Silent Barn reflects how the temporary nature of a DIY venue is a source of frustration for long-term residents. Carlos, a 36-year-old father of three of Mexican background, emphasizes the lifestyle differences between newcomers and the long-term Hispanic community:

We Hispanic are religious people, family people. The hipsters are not family people. One thing I’ve noticed where I have lived is that hipsters don’t stay. They come here two–three months and then they go. They are like nomads, they wander around. And they have no families. They like to party and drink all night ... It’s not that we don’t like the hipsters, but what is happening is affecting people who have been living here all their lives (Valli 1202-1203).

Carlos views the autonomy achieved by arts communities as a disconnection from family and long-term community. His frustration is paired with the material suffering experienced by communities evicted and displaced by landlords and developers seeking to profit from the newfound desirability of his neighborhood. For him, the temporariness of a DIY venue would not reflect the fragile intimacy of community, but the same community’s weaponization within gentrification. The difficulty is that even if, as long-time Silent Barn member G Lucas Crane tells Pelly, “the present and future of DIY is brown, queer and trans,” these same communities continue to be valued *as artists* over long-term black, brown, and queer communities because they attract higher income residents to their neighborhoods (2018).

As the Silent Barn lingers in memory, Trans-Pecos’s stability as a business entrenches its role in the gentrification of Ridgewood. Ridgewood

tenant advocates, protesters, and activists draw a direct line from arts and culture to gentrification, noting landlords utilize “Ridgewood’s renewed status [...] to displace longtime residents out of their homes in order to renovate the units and charge higher rents,” with Ridgewood’s eviction rate twice that of the rest of Queens in 2018 (Bultman 2016; Kromkei 2019).

Artists are positioned to disrupt gentrification, but they must first acknowledge their complicity. In the next section, I examine pain as sensation to show how queer people form community through different sensory experiences within mosh pits at DIY venues. The Deli Girls’ performance at Trans-Pecos discussed and those like the scene described by Pelly are extremely important for queer people to find community in shared pain. The ability to have these experiences within DIY venues is double-edged, both enabling community formation and rendering DIY communities complicit in gentrification. Do the walls of Trans-Pecos render the pain experienced by uprooted Latinx and Black populations inadmissible in performance? The final section approaches this problematic through theorizing queer community in DIY as queer kinship to politicize communal ties in service of anti-gentrification projects.

Pain as Community

Crammed into Trans-Pecos, the crowd surrounds an intricate patchwork of drum machines and samplers. Two figures in track suits lord over the assembled instruments. They reject the stage, instead occupying the area in-front of the crowd. As the first sampled kick drum careens out of the speakers, the audience collides into one another as if becoming both the absent drum pedal and drum skin. Trans-Pecos’s concrete walls, adorned with art and complemented by wooden benches, contain and amplify the thunderous electronics emanating from Deli Girls’ rig. Intense volume and noise music are frequent bedfellows as “noise’s affective power requires this visceral embodiment of its extreme volume” (Novak 2013, 46). Vocalist Danny Orłowski’s lyrics overtake the throbbing din of samples generated by multi-instrumentalist Tommi Kelly as Orłowski’s vocal cords strain to transform words into impassioned shouts: “You’d Kill Me/ But I’d Kill You First/ I See No Irony/ Real Scum Hides/ I Don’t Believe in Irony/ You Say Rights/ But You Don’t Mean Rights/ You Would Kill Me/ I See No Irony/ I See No Irony.”

Orłowski’s repetition of “I See No Irony” sends the crowd into an uncontrollable flurry. Varyingly called the mosh, circle pit, or pogo dancing depending on one’s subcultural allegiances, bodies spasm with reckless abandonment. Dick Hebdige, in considering pogo dancing in English punk subculture, situates the dance in relation to “changes in the tempo

of the music” arguing the frantic jumping up and down of the dance “for-bade” interpersonal sociality serving as “a *reductio ad absurdum* of all the solo dance styles associated with rock music” (Hebdige 1979, 108-109). Against this mechanic and solipsistic analysis of pogoing, cultural theorist Rosemary Overell stresses the mosh pit is “primarily experienced by audience members as affective” (Overell, 2014, 24). The divergent accounts illustrate the particular function affect plays in determining the relationship between the individual and the collective within dances associated with extreme music performances. Affect is a force that organizes bodies through “a non-conscious experience of intensity; it is a moment of unformed and unstructured potential” (Shouse 2005). For crowds of extreme music performances like noise, the intensity experienced during the show determines how individuals experience themselves as a crowd.

At Trans-Pecos, the crowd’s affect is particularly violent. As the intensity of the mosh grows, I feel something akin to what ethnomusicologist David Verbuč describes as “an affective state of existential desolateness” in that the abandonment of my own body into the chaotic mass of the crowd produces a “togetherness’ comprising separate individuals” (Verbuč 2018, 99). I am hurt—my shoe has slipped off and my feet are being pounded by stray boot heels—but this is a collective hurt. All around me, individuals fall, hoping to be caught by someone else in the crowd, a reflection of the implicit “pit etiquette” of looking out for one another that is taught through the feeling of the mosh pit (Riches 2011, 326).

Orlowski’s vocals tear through the crowd, beckoning crests in the violent mass. Orlowski’s lyrics, in their own words, explore their experience of sexual violence and the “socially glorified men [that] told me that there was no evidence that it happened” (Mashurov 2018). Reflecting on audience reactions to such personal lyrics, Orlowski notes, “It’s probably the best fucking feeling ever that people are into our record [...] I’m sure none of them are even aware of what it means to me. But it’s so cool to see people mosh and get angry [with this as] the soundtrack” (2018).

As with many Deli Girls’ performances, the people getting angry are a diverse collection of queers, femmes, non-binary people, clubbers, and punks of large and small body types. Baggy vintage shirts, black leather, neon hair, the sway of too many cheap beers, black boots overtop crushed cans, exposed skin bearing stick-and-poke tattoos—the audience hails from more aggressive corners of the rave and club scenes where punk’s jagged edges reemerge in distorted kick drums and shrill crashes. The scene embraces androgyny, gender play, and non-binary identity as comfortable aspects of DIY life in Brooklyn, with at least half of the performers on the bill at Trans-Pecos identifying as genderqueer and/or trans.

As this crowd assembles in the mosh, Orlowski deploys vocal repetition to invoke the immateriality of the collective experience of pain. In examining repetition within prayers, anthropologist Maria José de Abreu argues repetition unites body and voice “toward increasing immateriality and purification of one’s self” as individuals tune their bodies to the patterns of a sermon to experience sacred community (de Abreu 2008, 65). Attention to breathing in addition to the significance of words unite body and mind in the performance of prayer to produce an enraptured affect (2008, 66). Orlowski’s repetition of the phrase “I See No Irony”—referencing the irony of naming an album focused on recounting experiences of sexual violence *Evidence* after the same accounts were denied as evidence by the aforementioned socially glorified men and the ironic redeployment of violence against sexual abusers throughout the song “Real Scum Hides”—maintains a controlled breathing pattern to ensure appropriately screamed accents.

Orlowski breathes the lyrics into the crowd’s body, ‘purifying’ each member through uniting them in the collective mosh. As the affective intensity structuring the potential of these bodies, pain moves without intent from one body to another, ebbing and flowing with Orlowski’s repeating vocal lines and the rhythmic patterns of Kelly’s drum machines. Bringing individuals into the mass of the mosh pit, pain disorganizes the body of each participant by subjecting it to the collective affect conducted by Orlowski’s vocals (Musser 2012, 79). Similar to how goosebumps emerge as “pre-conscious affectual bodily response” generating a religious feeling, tensed and released muscles pre-consciously mediate the experience of collective belonging within the mosh pit, serving as a conduit for the pain experienced in bodily collision (de Abreu 2008, 61).

The religiosity of the mosh lies in the communal experience of pain that disorganizes individuality, producing a collective sense of belonging. Hebdige’s notion of the pogo as “*reductio ad absurdum* of all the solo dance styles” is replaced by the collective mosh pit as jointly desiring to inflict and to share in pain. The moments where bodies come into contact transcend “private ‘personal space’” as individuals lose their capacity to be separate from others and become part of a collective that “subverts and transcends the social boundedness of the body” (Verbuč, 2017, 294-295). Orlowski’s sense that the audience fails to understand the personal meaning of their music expresses the potential for moshing to transcend “the personal and representational aspects itself of show” through inviting the audience to feel part of “a momentary and intimate affective collective” (Verbuč, 2018, 92).

The mosh eschews the necessity of identifying with Orlowski’s lyrical

content, instead dwelling in the collective affect of shared pain. In her research on moshing in extreme music, heavy metal scholar Gabrielle Riches stresses this relationship between pain and collectivity as a way of gaining knowledge through “the experience of acknowledging human suffering, limitation, pain, vanity and morality in a collective manner” as to blur the dichotomy between “individuality/collectivity” (Riches, 2011, 320, 326). The community found in the mosh pit mobilizes shared pain into anger against sexual violence. As members of the crowd scream “You’d Kill Me/ But I’ll Kill You First,” collective pain from different experiences of violence illuminates agency. Feeling pain *together* is a source of strength, endurance, and power.

At the same time, the blurring of individuality and collectivity reflects the limits of the embodied knowledge gained through the collective pain experienced in the mosh. Moshing represents a different knowledge concerning the affect of community as opposed to the communication of individual experience. The movement from the solo pogo dancing to the collective mosh occurs as touch reorients “various senses of the world and attunement toward seeing and feeling in common” such that the touch is not “predicated on mastery and control” but “engaged participation” (Muñoz 2013, 106). This “engaged participation” exists outside of specific knowledge of Orłowski’s trauma in that it rejects an “identification of ‘oneself with ‘another’” through dissolving the difference between separate individuals within the mosh (Klima 2002, 229). Orłowski’s moshing *with* the audience as they vocalize their pain stresses solidarity and collectivity over knowledge and recognition. Pain isn’t communicated but felt.

This distinction between the pain expressed by Orłowski in their lyrics and the pain experienced in the mosh demonstrates that DIY social belonging emerges through audience’s limited capacity to comprehend the performer’s pain. Shared perception allows collective experience in listening and movement through performance’s “social and co-constitutive process that shapes and is shaped by knower and known, perceiver and perceived” (Thompson, 2017, 273). Shared perception therefore implies that what music *does in performance* cannot be separated from *how performance comes to exist*.

As a shared element of noise music performances involving mosh pits, pain *is* an element of the performance, but the pain *experienced* in the performance and the pain *expressed in* performance are distinct, co-constitutive elements. Pain experienced in performance constitutes an affect of the mosh that operates through a metacommunicative frame that “gives the receiver instructions or aids in [their] attempt to understand the messages included within the frame” (Bateson 1972, 188). The frame establishes a

distinction between a pure sense of inflicting pain for the sake of harm and a sense of pain as “play” that does not communicate an anti-social desire to harm. The frame is actualized through specific organizations of senses within DIY venues that allow participants to know “this is play” (Bateson 1972, 189-190). Pain in moshing is a felt epistemology of social belonging in the noise community, binding participants together through sharing pain within a community.

This framing of pain as play within performance is a momentary relation of care issuing forth from the mosh pit. The violence represented in Orłowski’s lyrics, in the moments in “You Want It You Got It” in which they scream “This Is My Body and I’ll Fucking Kill You/ And He Held Me Down/ And He Held Me Down” until their vocal cords strain, mobilizes pain to form community in the mosh. This collective moment of community is defined by the boundary between Orłowski’s experience of “the best fucking feeling” when seeing people “mosh and get angry” to their music and Orłowski’s knowledge that the same people are probably not “even aware of what it means to me.” (Overell, 2014, 173; Mashurov 2018). Orłowski points to the invigorating aspect of this exclusion, showing that the affective disjuncture between registers of pain binds the performer to the performance and the performance space not because of feeling the same as the audience but through feeling different. Performance allows artists to explore their own emotional depths while learning through others’ experience of the same but different feeling. In this way, Orłowski’s performance overcomes the difficulties of discussing sexual violence through creating a collective space of community and shared pain within the mosh pit. For audience members, the mosh pit becomes a place to support and care for one another through shouldering the ongoing pain of past traumas together.

As a part of the shared experience within DIY spaces, the intensity of performances and communal experiences binds artists and audiences to spaces. The affect imbued within the space elicits a particular sense of belonging and collectivity found within DIY. Lily identifies this affective charge of performance as a key political dimension of DIY, telling me that:

I think DIY in general is a very political thing right now. It is the ability to have no means and be an artist and be able to create something. It is also a way to have no means and *have an audience*, and be able to have no means and *see art*. Seeing art is exceptionally important to make it. It is a huge, key piece. Being able to see that and give people the opportunity to experience that is key.

Seeing art excites one’s capacity to create art. Following performance theo-

rist José Esteban-Muñoz, performance transforms this potential to create into intense affects that “generate a modality of knowing and recognition among audiences and groups that facilitates modes of belonging, especially minoritarian belonging” (Muñoz 2009, 99). For many queer Brooklynites, nonbinary people, and survivors of sexual assault, the Deli Girls’ mosh pit at a DIY venue is where they find a sense of belonging.

If what music does in performance cannot be separated from how performance comes to exist, the sense of belonging fostered cannot be separated from Trans-Pecos’s complicity in gentrification. Performance imbues a venue with meaning, but this meaning escapes the venue, becoming embedded within a neighborhood and utilized to facilitate gentrification. If artists are, as anti-gentrification activist group Decolonize This Place puts it, “lynchpins in the process of displacement” through occupying “the nexus of art and real estate market,” artists must become “weapons of creative resistance in solidarity with the communities where [they] live and work.” Gentrification is violence, resulting in pain, loss of community, and the destruction of homes for Black, Latinx, and other marginalized populations throughout New York City. This pain does not penetrate the walls of a DIY venue. Instead, it circulates in the community spaces and homes gentrification erodes. At the same time, the belonging and community formed through performance is a potential resource for anti-gentrification organizing, but only if it moves beyond the confines of a DIY venue. It must reject the instrumentalization of DIY community building within gentrification by making venues meaningfully accountable to their neighborhoods. Maybe more importantly, a possible queer kinship developed in performance must find ways to care for and grieve with those affected by gentrification while turning this pain into a source of strength and resistance.

Queer Kinship in Life and Death

On November 10th 2018, Ryota Machida suddenly passed away. I think about that night at The Glove.

Channel 63 writes on Instagram (November 13, 2018), “Thank you for everything [...] your music was so painfully important to me and it’s even more so now. I can hardly even believe that this happened, I’m incredibly happy I had the opportunity to call you a friend.”

Digital Punk act Machine Girl similarly eulogizes Machida on Instagram (November 12, 2018), recalling, “The Halloween gig with us, Love Spread and [Dreamcrusher] in 2015 is maybe still my favorite show we’ve played and the Love Spread set that night was life changing. Just a room full of friends hurling globs of fake blood and spider webs at each

other in a mosh pit barely five feet from a glass case full of exotic bugs and tarantulas.”

At the edge of the mosh pit, figures dance to Love Spread, throwing themselves into the music, but holding themselves back to protect the encased insects. A push and pull between abandonment and concern defines moshing. A push and pull between abandonment and concern defines any relation of care. When moshing, I must determine how much to let myself go into the chaotic flurry and how much I must look out for those around me. In relations of care, one must determine how much to let go, to love, to be consumed by concern for others, and how much to hold back, to preserve oneself. Love’s difficulty follows from being “an eros without teleology,” an intensity without direction that reshapes the relationship between individuality and collectivity (Nelson 2015, 44). Traditional Euro-American kinship organizes love within the hetero-patriarchal family, positioning love as a scarce resource to be shared between blood relatives and monogamous couples (TallBear 2018).

Against this conservatism, indigenous, feminist, and queer life and scholarship has deconstructed kinship predicated on blood to explore expansive relations of love, care, and support. Following Judith Butler, I understand kinship “as a set of practices that institutes relationships of various kinds which negotiate the reproduction of life and the demands of death” and kinship practices as “those that emerge to address fundamental forms of human dependency, which may include birth, child-rearing, relations of emotional dependency and support, generational ties, illness, dying, and death (to name a few)” (Butler 2002, 14-15). In order to care for those neglected by society, queer kinship attempts to resignify “the terms which effect our exclusion and abjection that such a resignification creates the discursive and social space for community” through developing systems of material and emotional support (Butler 1993, 131). Queer kinship is forged in struggled, representing precarious relations of care that must be continuously nurtured to survive. These struggles are “the difficult labor of forging a future” from drawing from dominant organizations of social life and remixing them into means of survival for marginalized populations (Butler 1993, 241).

Queer kinship’s precariousness is a source of expansiveness. In this final section, I turn to the relations forged in performance to understand how queer kinship within Brooklyn’s DIY noise scene circulates material and affective support beyond performance. In particular, I consider how queer kinship sustains queer life and mourns death. As a precarious connection, queer kinship is maintained in the scene through repeated practices of care and support found inside and outside of DIY venues. To conclude, I reflect

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on what an expansive queer kinship would mean for anti-gentrification organizing in New York City.

Queer kinship within the DIY community circulates resources (ticket revenue, drink sales, volunteer labor, drugs, friendship, aesthetic inspiration) as embodied support. Obligations of care organize relations of material interdependence. These obligations are forged in performance and extended through the care and support shown to people and spaces entangled in DIY's queer kinship. When interviewing Lily, we discuss how the DIY venue The Glove was a product of people volunteering to help with various tasks:

They just say, "Do you need help? I can do these kinds of things." People will offer. People want to be involved in things. And, I think that's pretty political in itself. People will absolutely offer free labor for things that they care about, or things that they want to be involved with. People want community.

Community as queer kinship reorganizes the social character of labor. As community in action, The Glove "begins to enact the social order it seeks to bring about by establishing its own modes of sociability" with volunteer labor tracing an alternative economy (Butler 2015, 84). The social character of volunteer labor is to further the circulation of value and affect *for others*. In this sense, DIY labor practices resonate with anthropologist Annette Weiner's understanding of the reproduction of value within relationships of reciprocity in which "value and wealth are embedded in 'others' as the primary mode of self-expansion" (Weiner 1980, 82). A willingness to volunteer to clean, to work the door, or to do handiwork circulates value as expressions of "the social relationships and reputations of which they are part" (Tsing 2015, 122). To this end, Glove curator and musician Charlie Dore-Young links community, space, and creative labor as the defining characteristics of The Glove, writing on Facebook (September 2, 2019):

What made The Glove so special and important was two things: a vibrant, multifaceted greater arts community that was able to progress and expand with the benefit of a place to congregate – and a group of open-minded curators (all artists themselves *HINT*) sharing/giving each other [sic] space to make their dreams possible.

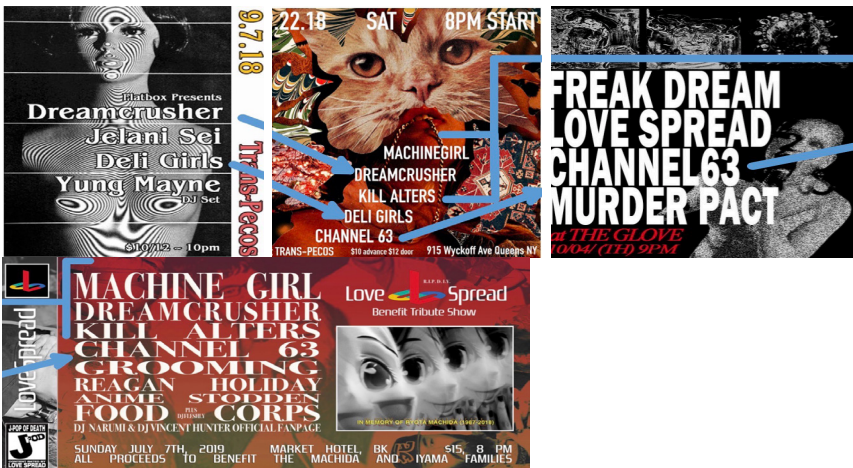
The artist-run nature and creative labor, in Dore-Young's account, are co-constitutive to the success of The Glove.

As value existing in circulation with others, the social character of labor requires communal reciprocity in order to reproduce itself. Asking others to perform, help build the space, promote the show, and attend the

performance creates social entanglements of value and expectations of reciprocity. These activities, which in other spaces are treated as economic practices, exist in DIY spaces as social obligations of queer kinship, constituting community itself. As Weiner notes, “One’s self, one’s position, and one’s potential as a reproductive agent depend upon relations with ‘others,’ because the reproductive process depends upon the circulation of possessions from ‘others.’ (Weiner 1980, 82).” The ten dollars in your pocket is an artist’s lunch; the beer from The Glove’s bar is the rent; the volunteer time is the conditions for community and intimacy.

The space exists only insofar as someone exists in service of someone else affectively through relations of intimacy and materially through reciprocal circulations of value. Intimacy organizes affect and material support, allowing DIY spaces to attend to needs (communal and biological) dominant social, economic, and political processes could not.

DIY in Brooklyn is a network of venues, houses, bars, and community spaces circulating resources and support. Performers’ willingness to host shows for each other and to organize concert bills highlights how queer kinship expands across space and time (Verbuč, 2017, 288; Campau 2012). The necessity of multiple acts to produce a bill means that bands are reliant upon one another to circulate a sense of community that sustains the scene. As an element of queer kinship, this mutual support is part of “the social and discursive building of community, a community that binds, cares, and teaches; that shelters and enables” that extends beyond any individual venue (Butler 1993, 93). Figure 2 traces this mutual support over the course of my fieldwork, demonstrating how mutual bookings across time and venues serve as a financial and affective network of queer kinship in the scene.



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Figure 1: Concert flyers between 2018-2019 at Trans-Pecos, The Glove, and Market Hotel

For Butler, queer kinship reworks the sociopolitical exclusion of queerness into an inclusive community of those who have been excluded (Butler 1993, 94). This model of kinship resonates with Brooklyn noise as the aesthetic exclusion of noise, the social exclusion of living within queer musical communities, and financial exclusion of making non-commercial music becomes a source of strength, organizing, and community. The preference for kinship over subculture in analyzing DIY noise follows from the usefulness of tracking circulations of resources and support that more meaningfully constitute community than the stylistic boundedness of subculture. In this sense, kinship shifts attention to “the circulation of possessions from ‘others’” that sustain life within the scene through norms of reciprocity (Weiner 1980, 73, 82). Norms of reciprocity govern circulations of material and emotional support as artists book one another, participate affectively in performances, donate money to one another, live together, and love one another.

Expanding the circulation of money and skills beyond queer kinship and DIY venues into local economies contains the potential to combat gentrification. Instead of patronizing new businesses geared to higher income residents, artists and DIY patrons must support “longstanding locally-owned businesses in order to help sustain vulnerable local economies” (Decolonize This Place). Moreover, the skills amassed through building DIY venues must be put towards repairing existing public housing, community centers, and longstanding art spaces through partnerships with local organizers. Venues must work with other building tenants and neighbors to ensure “tenant ownership in the form of cooperative, mutual housing associations, or community land trusts” takes their place once a venue closes (Decolonize This Place). Engagement in tenant organizing can prevent landlords from evicting tenants, and flipping properties for profit.

Moreover, queer kinship and DIY venues must expand their affective communities through consulting with long-term residents to determine how to support them. Programming, concert billings, art initiatives, and activism must be developed in conjunction with long-term community leaders, artists, and activist. DIY venues and scenes too often assume knowledge of a social problem and the type of art and music worth promoting without meaningfully consulting their neighborhoods. To develop relations of care, venue operators and scene participants must join existing community organizations to determine how the resources within a DIY venue and queer kinship network can be mobilized to support ongoing

anti-gentrification struggles.

Queer kinship attends to needs unmet by the unequitable organization of society. To be enmeshed and supported by queer kinship is not to transcend the exclusion and abjection of racial capitalism, hetero-patriarchy, and settler colonialism. Instead, it is a way of navigating and supporting queer life exactly because such a non-normative life is left to die. An expansive queer kinship endeavors to support marginalized lives both within the scene and within the neighborhood as a whole. In the absence of these efforts, queer kinship reifies the exclusions it seeks to overcome.

Queer kinship is the possibility of connection and the risk of relations fracturing. The public grief expressed in Channel 63 and Machine Girl's eulogies of Ryota Machida embodies this risk. To live through a network of material support, emotional care, and artistic community is to live precariously. Machida's death reverberated through the scene, felt through the queer kinship of mutant life. The July 7th 2019 benefit show honoring Machida's memory materializes grief. Through the show, artists who were materially and emotionally connected to Machida and Love Spread mobilize grief and pain found within loss to build community through performance. As a political act, the show makes Machida's death grievable in public, refusing to forget his life (Butler 2015, 119). Grief flows through the crowd as a felt sense. It is part of the larger embodied experience of community that binds the DIY noise scene together in queer kinship.

Grieving, like many of the affects discussed, blurs the distinction between subculture and kinship. DIY scenes must overcome their associations with subcultures to end their complicity gentrification. Central to this task is finding ways to grieve for the lives and homes already lost to gentrification and police violence. The pain experienced by Hispanic and Black communities must find a place within DIY venues so that we can grieve together. In turn, just as Deli Girls transforms pain into agency, the community formed in pain and mourning can organize against the real estate developers, landlords, and government officials destroying Black and Hispanic communities in Brooklyn and Queens.

A more expansive queer kinship will link the material and affective networks of DIY with organizing and activism within marginalized communities. For DIY venues to become "weapons of creative resistance in solidarity with" communities affected by gentrification, they must abandon a narrow focus on music and arts for their own sake (Decolonize This Place).

As 'Queer Nihilist Revolt Musik' composer Dreamcrusher observes:

The appeal of [DIY venues] is I can go here and not think about what I look like when I enjoy these things and [...] it makes me think about

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the surroundings when I'm not here. It makes me rethink my daily commute; it makes me think about how I interact with other people, how I am perceiving music, how other people are perceiving music when I'm with them (2018).

Dreamcrusher highlights how participation in DIY venues builds community and challenges the organization of cities. Music and arts within DIY spaces must channel the sounds, sights, and feelings to reshape participants' complicity in gentrification. In the same panel discussion, Dreamcrusher alluded to a performance by noise artist TRNSGNDR/VHS at the Glove. In it, TRNSGNDR/VHS asked the audience a question, "Because our scenes thrive on cultural individualism, and individualism is essential to free market capitalism, how are our scenes, subcultures beneficial to the communities that facilitate them under capitalism, through austerity, class-ism, racism, gentrification?" before adding, "If anyone in this room could answer me that question, without the use of any pronouns, meaning the words I, me, we, us cause this is about y'all. I will leave here the mic" (Outten 2017).

The room was silent for minutes before a woman of color in the audience accepted TRNSGNDR/VHS's invitation, followed by other performers and audience members. Simultaneously, some audience members, including a sizeable contingent of white men, left as the performance carried on. Finally, only the night's performers, others who had taken the mic, and members of The Glove collective remained. At this point, TRNSGNDR/VHS asked, "Anyone from the staff at The Glove like to come answer the question? Because I know that this venue was created by a group of white kids from, if not upper higher-class, middle-class backgrounds" (Outten 2017). There is no record of what was said, but I imagine the discomfort of the night outlasted the performance.

Life within DIY scenes is messy. DIY noise music in Brooklyn is defined by the contradictions of striving for autonomy in a city governed by real estate and finance. It is both ensnared within gentrification and an attempt at illuminating alternatives to capitalist urban development. It is a site of pain, struggle, grief, and loss and a site of joy, perseverance, intimacy, and community. If, as Judith Butler puts it, "we are moved by something that affects us from the outside, from elsewhere, from the lives of others," DIY communities must allow themselves to be moved by the pain of gentrification (2015, 102). The moment demands intimacy in the exploration of an other's depth. Maybe DIY communities will find more depth in themselves.

Notes

1. Love Spread, “R.I.P.D.I.Y. (Run in Pain, Depressed, Innocent Youth)” from *HOST IN THE HELL*. 2018, self-released.
2. Outside of references to particular musical acts and members of the collective behind the DIY venue The Glove, some names used are pseudonyms. Throughout this article, I use the singular pronoun “they” in accordance with the preferred pronouns of my interlocutors. The usage of “they” as a preferred pronoun is common practice within the scene to signal non-binary gender identity, promote gender inclusive language, and/or subvert the masculine/feminine gender binary.
3. Throughout this article, I examine communities that explicitly use the discourse of DIY to refer to themselves. Many other scenes practice ‘doing-it-yourself’ ethics, but do not explicitly refer to the discourse such as the progenitors of hip-hop in the Bronx or the contemporary Soundcloud rap scene.

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