

## **Giving Scissors to the Sisters: Ana Matronic and Cutting Up the Popular Cultural landscape**

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The point is that while a well-funded cultural system exists to spew out ruling-class culture, any culture, art and history promoted outside of this system relies largely on concerned maverick groups or individuals. The society is only 'liberal' or 'pluralist' to the extent that it tolerates those difficult voices which are generally let in to spice up the mainstream only when it becomes intolerably bland. In the meantime, we lose so much of our culture.<sup>1</sup>

~ Irvine Welsh

[We are] finding that middle ground between mainstream culture and bringing to mainstream culture something that is interesting and subversive enough to mean something.<sup>2</sup>

Babydaddy

Nostalgia is a corrosive force, weathering the passionate specificity of an era. During bad times, of global debt and unsteady, hawkish political coalitions, it is calming to pull out that Crosby, Stills and Nash Greatest Hits album and remember a time when children could be taught (well) about peace, the environment and nuclear disarmament. Those tight harmonies reassured that the world would get better. The only problem is that I do not believe (in) the 1960s anymore. As I was born in 1969, such a statement should not be surprising. But the sixties (man) mean more than any dates or span of years. This decade ideologically signals experimentation, permissiveness, challenge and protest. While most sixties people lived their lives without being touched by the events of May 1968, Vietnam protests or sexual revolution, there was at least an aura of possibility, that the world was changing. Between the lentils and the flowers was colour and energy.

Walking around the present political landscape, it is as if the colour and cacophony has been turned down on the global television set. Everyone seems old, bald and dressed in ill-fitting trousers. Generation X – let alone the youth cultures that followed – has been cut out of the picture. In such a scorched soundscape, the disciplined mobilization of nostalgic popular culture has a political edge. The great semiotic surprise is that the 1970s is the palette of potential. The Darkness brought forward the camp excesses of Marc Bolan, along with the lycra jumpsuits, to give homo-progressive rock another tilt at the charts.<sup>3</sup> Like an atheist John the Baptist, the Darkness was followed by an even more significant cultural phenomenon. The Scissor Sisters return feathers, leather, sequins and skin to the pop database. They configure a pastiche of the last four decades of popular music, splicing Elton John's 1970s piano with try-hard disco and Ziggy Stardust excesses. They are the Village People for the 2000s, without the pretence of heteronormative family entertainment. The nudge-nudge wink-wink of the Village People has been replaced by the provocative jab of incisive politics, slicing the family agenda of the Neo-Conservatives<sup>4</sup> with a sharp twist of the blade.

Babydaddy, Jake Shears, Del Marquis, Paddy Boom and Ana Matronic<sup>5</sup> have constructed a tarted-up, engorged world where mesh vests, suspenders and fur are normal street wear.<sup>6</sup> This paper delves below the Scissor Sisters' frilly petticoats and suspenders to probe their disciplined mobilization of popular cultural history. An alternative world is summoned where New York is untouched by terrorists and HIV. This is pop with not only a past, but an agenda. For this special 'Popular Culture' issue, to aim is to specifically stress Ana Matronic's role as a translator between the past and present, straight and gay, terrorized and safe.

**Sound of time**

Jake: I'm feeling a little Village People right now.

Paddy: Well bring it on.<sup>7</sup>

The Scissor Sisters offer an alternative path through globalization. Arising from the ashes of post-September 11 New York, they moved to Britain for chart success. Just as the Beatles returned American rock to America, the Scissor Sisters gave Bolan back to Brighton.<sup>8</sup> They followed the Jimi Hendrix model to success: non conformist Americans, who find little space or credibility in their homeland, gain fame in the United Kingdom and then import themselves back to their origin.

Their movements in time are even more fascinating than these movements through space. They not only summon a landscape where the Twin Towers still stand but an era where AIDS never happened. Sex is fun again. Voyeurism is undercut with excitement and potential, not tragedy. As Ana Matronic confirms:

Ladies and Gentlemen we are here to transport you and take you on a journey. We're here to take you to an old kinda time and an old kinda place. A place like Times Square used to be, before it got all Disneyed out. When a guy called Rudy came in and threw out all the hustlers that looked a lot like this boy [pointing at Jake Shears] over here. We're going to take you back to where that was. Imagine that you are walking down, downtown, fifty second and Broadway. There's light, there's strip clubs, there's peep shows. Two dollar trannie hookers in really, really expensive shoes. You can hear a little beckoning call saying come over here. We've got an After Hours Club ... And all of a sudden out of the corner of your eye, you see this kinky haired, Amazon, god, goddess, deity, creature thing with extra big lips and extra wide hips. You've got to have this. You want to break your arse on to the dance floor. You take one look at her and you say are you ready for this?<sup>9</sup>

This world of excess and humour is populated by what Ana Matronic described as "two dollar tranny hookers in really, really expensive shoes." The Scissor Sisters are bathed in nostalgia for a sexual nirvana where identity is in flux and sex is dangerous. Such narratives access stories of deviance and difference, offering dense alternatives to streamline neo-conservative ideologies about families,<sup>10</sup> crime<sup>11</sup> and constitutional "reform" to deny gay marriage.<sup>12</sup> These national policies are bladed by city imaginings.

Cities are mobile in their boundaries and population. Often they are interpreted as spaces of isolation, breaking up more organic and meaningful local communities. Tonkiss confirmed that "forms of indifference also afford certain rights to and freedoms in the city."<sup>13</sup> Yet popular cultural cities rarely present aloneness. Carrie, Miranda, Samantha and Charlotte have each other and sex in the city. The Scissor Sisters, who were isolated in their lives before they arrived in New York, gained community and connection in the global city. Tonkiss confirmed that:

New York City, the borough of Manhattan in particular, has often functioned as an abstract city, symbolizing processes, experiences and effects that stand as exemplary of the modern urban. It has enjoyed the kind of imaginative life that some cities do; one of translation, extension and long-distance identification.<sup>14</sup>

Cities are highly differentiated. Global cities are the confirmations of this principle.<sup>15</sup> The Scissor Sisters summon a nocturnal New York with an agenda, not a Manhattan of Prada loafers and Cosmopolitans. Yet while beckoning a past New York as the framework for the Scissor Sister's music and persona, they did not gain popularity in this city. "Innovative consumption,"<sup>16</sup> to use Justin O'Connor's phrase, was not aligned with the site of production. Their fount of creativity was not their base of commercial success. This disconnection is not unusual as the contemporary urban space is often configured as not only sites of connection and resilience, but

mobility and collapse.<sup>17</sup> Diverse and disconnected cities dialogue and dance in popular culture. Production and consumption rarely align through urban geography, or the connection between text and audience.

Music is integral to the development of a spatial vocabulary. While Grieco and Raje warn of “a geography of social exclusion”<sup>18</sup> through the public service failure of the welfare economy and isolation of low income communities, mobility becomes a marker of affluence. The local is all the poor and marginalized can grasp.<sup>19</sup> Those who can move are marked from those who cannot. Trans-localism is the gift to the fortunate and the talented in the music and sporting industries. As the Scissor Sisters moved from New York, their imagining of the city became more central to their performance.<sup>20</sup> The rationale for this concurrent displacement and identification was diagnosed by Zygmunt Bauman:

Once identity loses the social anchors that made it look ‘natural,’ predetermined and non-negotiable, ‘identification’ becomes ever more important for the individuals desperately seeking a ‘we’ to which they may bid for access.<sup>21</sup>

The cost and consequences of mobility are the building of an imagining, a constructed community that captures a displaced belonging without a physical landscape to tether the self.

Such a New York dreaming expressed by Ana Matronic, of transsexuals and After Hour Clubs, demonstrates that the Scissor Sisters are not a pre-packaged vocal group or Pop Idol winners that have dominated much of popular music since the decline of techno. Not surprisingly, the Scissor Sisters are outside teenage pop. In 2006, their ages ranged from the youngest, Del Marquis at 26 years of age, to Paddy Boom, at 37. This urgent ‘we’ of identification, denied through displacement from New York, is reconfigured through the lived experience of diversity in age and sexuality.

When neo-conservatism frames domestic and foreign policy, the summoning of glam rock and disco has a precise purpose. The 1980s jut unstably through Scissorland, and punk is a skewed presence.<sup>22</sup> Like post-punk music more generally, they enacted an almost scholarly diagnosis of life after the Sex Pistols. Kitty Empire, in her analysis of the New Wave, assembled a description that can easily incorporate the Scissor Sisters.

Many of them came to pop from art college with austere agendas, bristling with theories and influences culled from art, literature, performance and critical theory. Inspired by the seismic upheavals punk conducted in subject matter as well as chord play, the post-punks sought to bring to pop the most un-pop of themes. Boy meets girl gave way to lyrics about industrial decay and the mechanics of power ... Former Roxy Music man-turned-producer Brian Eno emerges as a benign eminence grise throughout the period, connecting the arty end of the pre-punk period to the experiments of the post punks, and popping up behind the production desk for a trio of Talking Heads albums.<sup>23</sup>

Like a post-millennial Brian Eno, the Scissor Sisters moved beyond the framework of guitar-bass-drums-vocals and unlike punk do not shun dance culture. They not only sing about industrial decay but the party jutting out from the concrete and iron. To understand the Sisters requires a consideration of not only the 1970s in its glammed up finery, but the post-punk thinking pop carried by bands such as Talking Heads, Joy Division and New Order.<sup>24</sup>

While the 1980s maintains an ambivalent place in Scissorland, the 1970s and 1990s are securely placed in their cultural portfolio. Plaiting the pop personas of the Spice Girls with a meta-Village People, they are composed of a queen,<sup>25</sup> a fag hag, a bear, a pseudo-goth queer stylist and a gay-friendly straight man. Like the Spice Girls, there are five of them, all with names and identities. Much happened in the nine years since Posh, Baby, Sporty, Scary and Ginger gained

fame, including September 11 and the second Iraq War. Living outside of heterosexual marriage and a nuclear family is increasingly a radical act. There is no chance of Ana Matronic marrying an overpaid footballer, having three sons, two named after the places of their conception and the third reserved for Spanish girls, and having enough collagen pumped into her lips so that they arrive ten minutes before the rest of her. Fag hags do not let us down. They simply move on.

While unearthing music from the 1970s, their immediate context also reveals a more precise trigger. September 11 was a cause and gauze for the Sisters. Babydaddy remembers that:

Our first performance was ten days after September 11, and there was this air of trying to do something, something that would entertain our friends and ourselves ... That was the first time I heard someone make a joke about September 11. It was time.<sup>26</sup>

The notion of laughing at terrorism seems dangerous and inappropriate. In the month following the tragedy, using it for the basis of comedy was courageous if foolhardy. At this time, there were two Scissor Sisters. Ana Matronic was asked to join when her club night closed. Then a guitarist was required for their live tour of the United Kingdom. Del Marquis entered the Scissorhood as a direct consequence of the collapsed Twin towers:

Like most people I'd lost my job in the chain reaction of people kind of closing up. They were afraid of investing. I was at a loss. I couldn't pay my rent.<sup>27</sup>

Workers are not protected – economically and socially – by words like downsizing, restructuring, rationalizing and reorganization.<sup>28</sup> During an era of precarious employment, retraining, skill development and job enrichment are masks and excuses for the reality that there is not enough work for organized labour to do.<sup>29</sup> Being forced to live social alternatives to pay the rent does offer productive creative opportunities.<sup>30</sup> Similar to the search for a guitarist, a drummer was required for the British tour. Paddy Boom, who had been drumming for fifteen years in New York, thought “my shelf life was coming dangerously close.”<sup>31</sup> All the proto-Scissor Sisters were employed in temporary, contingent and part-time work. They were vulnerable when the New York economy retracted through the economic crisis triggered by terrorism. While the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon changed international relations, they also rendered the local and global economy more fragile.

The social fabric also frayed. September 11 was so significant because it was delivered on live television, offering one of the most horrific symbolic challenges to historical narratives of progress and modernity. The visual memory of the towers crunching to collapse increased the importance of locating a community, stabilizing an identity and defining its interests. September 11 demonstrated that the primary concepts through which international relations were run – like core and periphery, first and third worlds – no longer functioned. In its aftermath, there was a desire to solidify the boundaries between communities. Such a division leads to sloganized answers to difficult questions. The Axis of Evil was fought by a Coalition of the Willing. Yet Mark Beeson and Alex Bellamy realized that “rather than ‘us and them,’ ‘good and evil,’ we need to appreciate that the world is tied together by complex networks and transactions that transcend or subvert borders, and which render simply binary oppositions redundant.”<sup>32</sup> Terrorism organizes social relationships: the right to dissent is undermined through a focus on the necessities of countering terrorism. The use of reductive labels and phrases - like terrorist, gay marriage, extremists, fundamentalist, or freedom-loving people - serves to erase the cause, context and history that formulates an identity.<sup>33</sup> Terrorism creates an irrational environment where logical discussions of history, cause and effect are displaced.

Moving beyond an emotional response to create a thinking space after September 11 has been difficult. Ziauddin Sardar and Merryl Wyn Davis implicated American popular culture in this narrowing of ideas and ideologies:

American popular culture creates stereotypes and exports them around the world. But, as we also argue, America is not an open market for the cultural products of other countries. It is easy to build a stereotype of America as an insular, self-absorbed nation of continental proportions that knows little or nothing about the rest of the world. One overriding American response to criticism and dissent over the war in Iraq was to say: 'So what? I just don't care what the rest of the world thinks.' Yet ... America cannot be reduced to such a simplistic stereotype. It contains debate, difference and opinion and criticism of its role and activities abroad.<sup>34</sup>

The Scissor Sisters confirm their argument. Their movement to the United Kingdom, living and working as displaced Americans, granted them a space to explore alternative views and ideas, similar to Michael Moore's long-term dialogue with Canadian audiences and institutions. This mobility makes them important translators. Popular culture, particularly through the suite of new documentaries and popular music, is creating a textual environment in which to answer back.<sup>35</sup> The Scissor Sisters are important because they speak out. They present alternative views of religion, sex, drugs and family: Ana: I hate to break it to you, but God is just a stuffed animal for adults.<sup>36</sup>

How fans respond to such statements is important, grafting an alternative space to consensus, compliance and consumption. Her words are significant in a time when religious doctrine has replaced critical thought. For example Tom DeLay, as the leader of the House of Representatives in the United States Congress, once had the nickname of Hot Tub Tom amongst Texas legislators because of his fondness for pleasure and parties. In the mid-1980s, he 'found' God while watching television. The televangelist James Dobson convinced him to seek the light, and the support of the religious right. Through 2005, DeLay faced travel scandals, alongside the charge that both his wife and daughter were paid US\$500,000 from the campaign funds. In response to such challenges, he hid behind the Terri Schiavo case, confirming her right to life. When the Supreme Court did not agree with the Congressman, he preached that "the time will come for the men responsible for this to answer for their behaviour, but not today."<sup>37</sup> When there was a public backlash for his religious retribution on the judiciary, he attended the National Rifle Association convention. He justified his presence with intent and energy: "when a man's in trouble or in a good fight ... you want all your friends around them, preferably armed. So I'm in good company tonight."<sup>38</sup> In such a context, Ana Matronic's precise interventions in the dogmas of religion, family and sexuality become even more important.<sup>39</sup>

While attacking religion, conservative politics and homophobia with humour and the shock of difference, the Scissor Sisters use inversion with great effectiveness. They take politics very lightly, and popular music very seriously. Music fandom is an evocative part of the Scissor Sister ideology. With intent and consciousness, they carry forward pop history. Ana is often the narrator of this cultural past.

And we should know what it's like to be music fans. The people on this stage are rabid music fans. People [pointing to Del] who stalked Robert Smith. People [pointing to Babydaddy] who love Billy Joel and don't care if their band members don't. People [pointing at Paddy] who ride on a motorcycle all the way to Brazil to be part of a drum circle ... people [pointing at Jake] who love My Life With The Thrill Kill Cult, Dolly Parton and Roxette simultaneously. And women who worship women who use this [pointing to head] not this [pointing to vagina].<sup>40</sup>

The embodiment of this serious fandom is Del Marquis. On multiple occasions in the band's publicity, he states that he stalked Billy Duffy from The Cult and Robert Smith from The Cure, and is waiting for an opportunity to stalk Johnny Marr from the Smiths.<sup>41</sup> He was 23 years old when he made these statements. Seeing the Scissor Sisters mingling with other musicians is

instructive. Jake Shears photographed himself talking with Simon Le Bon. Ana Matronic was excited to meet Nick Rhodes. Baby Daddy wants to meet Brian Eno.<sup>42</sup> On Later ... with Jools Holland, he asked them about the other performers on the show.

Ana: I can't believe I am going to be in the same room as David Byrne. I am a huge, huge Talking Heads fan and I have been recently very obsessed with the album 'More Songs about Buildings and Food'. There's a song on there called 'Warning Sign' which I have just been listening to non-stop.

Jake: What's the song off that record that I love so much?

Ana: 'Good thing' which I love as well. Yeah ... he is just an incredible mind which I'd love to have the opportunity to explore.<sup>43</sup>

Popular culture is pivotal to determining identity. There is seriousness – almost a scholarship – to the Scissor Sister's fandom. They are always generous in affirming the popular music of the past. It is music that has allowed them to create more diverse nodes and points of identity, beyond the ground zero and time zero of September 11.

Sensual Soundscapes:

Ana: Why don't you tell the people where we're from?

Jake: We're from New York City.

Ana: Ah, New York.

Jake: What are we here to do tonight?

Ana: We're here to take you back ... One step back and two step forwards. We're here to take you back to a New York that was beautiful and dirty, grimy and gorgeous.

Imagine ladies and gentlemen, a peep show.<sup>44</sup>

The Scissor Sisters were made in New York, not born there. The three founding members were all derived from the southern states of the United States, thereby returning rock 'n' roll honky-tonk to popular music. From this environment and origin, New York was a magnet.

Babydaddy: I grew up in a very conservative place, and felt out of place. I always had the idea that if I felt different then there were others who felt different and there'd have to be a way to engage those people.

Ana: I always knew that I would end up in New York, and my natural father took me there when I was thirteen. From the second I set foot there, I knew I would end up there someday.

Jake: That's what everyone wants. Who doesn't want to go to Oz?<sup>45</sup>

New York, as a world city, is the ink in their musical well. It represents excellence,<sup>46</sup> diversity<sup>47</sup> and renewal.<sup>48</sup> The difficulty for the Scissor Sisters is that their New York was an imagining, an Oz without a wizard behind the curtain. Even more seriously, it was locked in a past that was impossible to reconfigure or reclaim except through music and story telling. They were strangers in New York who, like the best of tourists and migrants, became the greatest cheerleaders of the city.<sup>49</sup>

Global cities like New York, London and Tokyo are sites of diverse musical formations. While second-tier cities are connected with particular genres,<sup>50</sup> global cities are large enough to feature multiple burgeoning scenes. In the last few years, the Strokes, Scissor Sisters, Interpol, Bravery and Yeah Yeah Yeahs have all gained a start in New York and success beyond it. The impact of English music from the 1970s and 1980s on these bands demonstrate an odd and intricate looping of sonic history and the relationship between cities. Bravery's single "An honest mistake" shows the strong derivation and influence of New Order.<sup>51</sup>

The Scissor Sisters are not only cheerleaders but cultural commentators on their adopted city. They blamed neo-conservative political leaders for slicing the sleaze from New York. Ana Matronic confirmed that:

New York nightlife when Giuliani came in was systematically stripped to nothing ... I wanted to have a nightlife experience that had a show. Something more intimate and cabaret inspired. And so, four friends and I started [the club night] Knock Off.<sup>52</sup>

This cabaret New York was different from the one featured in *Sex in the City*. The four women are affluent, fashionable and aware of the inequalities that limit women's lives. The Scissor Sisters deny conformity and heteronormativity and celebrate deviance. Giuliani is not the only cause of Ana Matronic's nostalgia. AIDS transformed the life of cities after dark. Even though the intense fear of the disease in the gay community has eased, sexual intercourse between two people can never again be based on trust alone. The pumped up sexuality of the Scissor Sisters exists without fear or caution. They summon an old, artificial, sexualized New York with an agenda.<sup>53</sup> Only through popular cultural exile – being distanced from a 'real' New York in 'real' time - can mobility grant sexual space and agency. Britain allowed the Scissor Sisters to shape and mould a New York of difference.

What makes the Scissor Sisters significant is that all the band members are out of the closet, and that includes the two heterosexuals. Ana Matronic described herself as "way more of a faggot than Jake and Babydaddy. They don't know who Heddy Lamarr is."<sup>54</sup> Paddy Boom, the heterosexual male in the Sisters, recognized the political significance of the band and audience. His openness to diversity and his capacity to think critically about sex and identity after being in the band is overtly articulated:

I realized after a few months that we're all in this together. I like them. They like me. I have learnt an immense amount after being around these guys.<sup>55</sup>

The importance of this statement must be recognized. Heteronormativity punctuates popular culture and institutions of power. Assumptions about romance, love, sex and families are rarely probed or questioned. For a 37 year old heterosexual man – a drummer indeed – confirming that he "learnt an immense amount" from gay men and a fag hag is not only an act of generosity, but of political bravery. He could be staunch, straight and silent. He chooses to speak, be comfortable with homosociality, and change his understanding of life, music and sex.

The Scissor Sisters also challenge their audience to think differently. Their fan profile is wide. As Jake Shears realized, "when it's 4:30am and you've got grandma on stage partying with you, you know something works."<sup>56</sup> Considering this diversity, the role and function of gayness in the Scissor Sisters is ambiguous to chart. Because a pre-AIDS homosexuality is their sexual sampling of choice, they play with words, labels and fashions:

Ana: I am a gay man trapped in a woman's body.<sup>57</sup>

Del: I'm a straight Porto Rican guy trapped in a gay man's body.<sup>58</sup>

Jake: The fact that some of our members are gay affects the music as much as the fact that some of the members of Blondie are straight.<sup>59</sup>

The sexual politics of the band, the playfulness and ambivalence, are embodied through these three statements. Jake Shears' pointed yet implicit comment that the heterosexuality of bands is never questioned or discussed unless falling outside the patrolled borders of normality, is both evocative and confronting. He is not suggesting that the Scissor Sisters' sexuality is irrelevant to



the music. Instead, he inverts the question,<sup>60</sup> demanding that both homosexuality and heterosexuality be granted a context and a history.<sup>61</sup> They are 'out' in culture,<sup>62</sup> and are not 'straight-acting' or providing the benevolent face of gay men immersed in a nurturing and committed monogamous relationship. Stephen Maddison confirmed that:

The word fag may upset those gay men who feel that we should always refer to ourselves in respectable or dignified terms. Bullocks to that ... our desire for respectability is an assimilationist trap, and I reject it. I am not a decent homosexual, I'm a flaming fag.<sup>63</sup>

The Scissor Sisters are inclusionary, but not assimilationist. They will party with anyone. They have found a fertile (post)apocalyptic time for their sexual soirées. If any year was fuelled by cheap champagne and stale cologne then it was 2004. As Iraq War II became The Empire Strikes Back, and George W. Bush was returned with a larger majority as a reward for losing (control of) a war that was supposedly already won, Scissor Sisters became a soundtrack to understand how we got here. Babydaddy, looking back on a stellar and unpredictable 2004, stated that "it has been an amazing year to say the least ... We've gone from being a basically anonymous group of five weirdos to five weirdos with a best selling album in the UK!"<sup>64</sup> The Scissorhood who participate online invariably link this time and place.

Frazzle: You are all unique and funky and filthy and clearly exactly what many, many people have been looking for.

Filthy G: I can't even begin to describe what 2004 was like for me – all the Scissor Sisters, this forum and the amazing people I've met (and the shitty people I've lost ;))

Daglow: Huge thank you to all the guys for turning my world upside down last year and for all the joyous and happy times.

Bird: The music really is more than music to me now.<sup>65</sup>

Bird is correct. Music is always more than music. When life is tough, soundtracks become even more important. There is an intensity to this fandom that is modeled on the energy of the band's fandom. Difficult times need partying music.

The sexual diversity is also matched by genre cherry picking. The Scissor Sisters is not a rock band. Neither do they cleanly slot into the many definitions of electronica. Cabaret, performance art, film, fashion and fifty years of popular music all resonate on stage and through the recorded music. They are bitchy, aggressive and funny. At the end of the Channel Four documentary on the band, and over the credits, Ana Matronic and Baby Daddy were in the back of a taxi criticizing the programme they just made.

Ana: It's wrong. It's bad. It's stupid. He wrote the screenplay with the laptop in one hand and his dick in the other.

Babydaddy: You know what, you're making horrible television right now.<sup>66</sup>

Every now and again, the right band finds the correct time and the perfect audience. In 2004, the Scissor Sisters performed live at the Brighton Dome. Party people from the United Kingdom traveled to join the Scissorhood. One fan confirmed that "they are all about flamboyance and we are here to support the Scissor Sisters."<sup>67</sup> Any band, composed of three gay men, one straight man and a fag hag know that they will become a cultural magnet for party queens all over the world. The fans of the band – the Scissorhood – are given permission to frock up with big hair, feathers and excessive nudity. Too often the fans of popular culture are a disappointment. The Pet Shop Boys' audience should be more fashionable and aloof, and The Cure's crew more angry and brooding. But the Scissorhood looks the part. Several thousand lycra creatures died to couture the audience, let alone the performers on the stage.



The relationship between the band and the fans pivots on Ana Matronic's translational role. While her function in the band is to sing, she 'plays' the audience:

Ana: I said it last night and I'll say it again tonight. No band is anything without the people that buy their records, go on their websites, and go to their shows in many different countries. The people who drive the Scissor Sisters party bus.<sup>68</sup>

The popular cultural literacy is high in the band and the fans. The band's entry onto the stage is to the disco mix of Dolly Parton's "Baby I'm burning." Like most Southern Rock, their songs mention cities by name. Audience members dress as Jedi Knights. Odd films and popular cultural literacies emerge in lyrics.<sup>69</sup> There are more bears in the crowd than in a metropolitan zoo. Richie and John "Bear Daddies" attended twelve Scissor Sisters shows in 2004, and were mentioned by name in their documentary.<sup>70</sup> Television shows are as real and important as disco lights.

Ana: So like a lot of Scissor Sisters songs, the next one is a story. About a lady who existed over the rainbow beyond the Valley of the Dolls. Two doors down from 10 Downing Street.

Jake: She was very beautiful.

Ana: Prom Queen.

Jake: Prom Queen.

Ana: Prom Queen of Twin Peaks High School.

Jake: And one fine day she washed up on the shores of the Pacific North West dead ....

Ana: Wrapped in plastic.

Jake: And her name is Laura.<sup>71</sup>

Most members of the band are old enough to be included in the conventional definition of Generation X, born between 1961 and 1981. Their discussion of films and television, from David Lynch to Jim Henson, confirms the wide-ranging popular cultural literacy of this imagined and imagining community.<sup>72</sup> They know the pop past so well that they use it to show that there are alternative histories beyond and before the trajectories of September 11, terrorism, us and them. To monitor how these differences are accessed and performed, the spotlight must focus on the Marlene Dietrich of contemporary pop music.

### Fag Hag Fandom

She likes to smoke a chronic. She loves her gin and tonic. She's slightly bionic. Ladies and gentlemen, she's Ana Matronic. (Jake Shears)

Are you ready for this? (Ana Matronic)<sup>73</sup>

Great songs are not sufficient to attain popular cultural success. Ana Matronic is the woman that the 2000s needed to mock the ideologies of family and motherhood that suffocate the plurality of femininities. Girl power exhausted itself very quickly. Difficult women were needed to go the distance in a critique of family, sex and marriage. Fag hags are important to popular culture and society more generally. They have an under-theorized role, being the cultural translator between heterosexuality<sup>74</sup> and homosexuality. Translation is the correct word, as they morph and change the original sexuality – straight or gay - in its passage and pull to the other binary pole.<sup>75</sup> As a dissident subject, she moves between discourses providing a model and map for a fluent and fluid identity. The fag hag is significant because she separates the ideological assumptions tethering heterosexuality, marriage and procreation. Living between these spaces, femininity becomes defined through much more than reproductive sexual organs. The functions of women arch beyond motherhood, home and domesticity. Such a critique is important in a popular cultural environment where books like Leslie Cannold's *What, no baby?* can be published with the

subtitle “why women are losing the freedom to mother, and how they can get it back.”<sup>76</sup> The freedom to work, to leisure, to have sex without the imperative of procreation and domesticity are not within the vista of this book. She states that “while education and ambition don’t dampen a woman’s desire for motherhood, they severely restrict her chances of achieving it.”<sup>77</sup> Such neo-conservative propaganda emerged from a university imprint of Fremantle Arts Centre Press.

Fag hags are important in conservative times when even University Presses are implicated in critiquing the university education of women. Calvin Thomas’s corrective suggests that, “the overly generalized deployment of such terms as “queer” or “homo-ness” is that the terms can allow straights who are drawn to them to sidestep interrogations of their own sexual practices – or, more precisely, the mutually reinforcing relationship between their culturally sanctioned sexual practices and their privileged and valorized social identities.”<sup>78</sup> Heterosexual women have complex questions to ask themselves. As they are – literally – sleeping with the enemy, the issue is how they avoid reinforcing heteronormativity through their behaviour, language and lifestyle. Stevi Jackson argued that the first stage is to avoid the conflation of “heterosexuality as an institution with heterosexual practice, experience and identity.”<sup>79</sup> Many political struggles are shared between lesbian and heterosexual women. Many political struggles are not. The women moving between spaces, who must speak their sexualized identity to shred the assumptions of romance, marriage and family, are transgressive. Those who gain from the culture of heteronormativity and are also critical of it transform assumptions of self and society.

Margaret Cho has offered the most overt presentation of the power and passion of fag haggery:

I love the word ‘faggot’ because it describes my kind of guy! You see, I am a fag-hag. Fag-hags are the backbone of the gay community. Without us, you’re nothing! We have been there all through history guiding your sorry ass down the Underground Railroad! ... We went to the prom with you.<sup>80</sup>

Cho is a courageous woman. She states – overtly and clearly – that her experience of homophobia and sexist heterosexuals has built her alliance and allegiances as a fag hag. On National Public Radio, on November 19, 2003, she specifically rallied against the amendments proposed to ban gay marriage:

If the amendment banning gay marriage is actually passed, then it would be the first time that the constitution would be amended specifically to deny the rights of a specific minority, which frankly is downright unconstitutional ... Same sex couples should have the ability to get married by Elvis, just like everyone else.<sup>81</sup>

The fag hag, a heterosexual woman who has gained power and rights through marriage, is speaking for that right to be given to others. This translational role is clear. David Johnson realized that “translation does not determine the original; it simply opens a space.”<sup>82</sup> Similarly, Ana Matronic, as the only woman in the Scissor Sisters, translates between the straight and gay members of the band, not only providing a visual presence of femininity in popular music, but a fulcrum for the politics of the band. She mouths the most transgressive of sexual banter, not the gay men. Such words and actions challenge straight women to think about sexuality, and straight men to think differently about their assumptions of heterosexuality.

Ten years ago, Vanessa Evangelista and I described the fag hag as a “free-floating a/sexual being, taking her pleasure where she desires and (temporarily) shunning the commitment of home and ‘straight life.’”<sup>83</sup> We confirmed her as the leader of the queer patrol [with] her provocative duty to question the identity of ‘real men’ and ‘real women’... The mobility of the fag-hag to shift seamlessly between expectations and ideologies immerses her in a flood of binary oppositions: sexual and asexual, straight and gay, text and context.<sup>84</sup>

Looking back on my statements a decade later, it is the mobility, rather than the leadership, of the fag hag that remains interesting, and how temporary these loyalties and denials may be. Mike Featherstone recognized that “there has been an upsurge of interest in recent years in the significance of flows, movements and mobility in social life.”<sup>85</sup> The fag hag leads scholars into the potential and complexity of the movements in the meaning, and the meanings in the movement.

Scissorland is a place where Bush, Blair and Howard never happened. Fag Hags have taken over parliament. They speak, dominate, argue and say the untranslatable. This is a nostalgic place, populated by disco divas and gay clones. In such a place, Dorian Gray could be young and beautiful forever, and not anchored to a decaying portrait in the attic. It is their humour that translates between sexuality, time and place.

Ana: This next song is about eating pussy, isn't it Jake Shears?

Jake: Yes, it is about eating pussy.

Ana: Who says you have to write what you know?<sup>86</sup>

Indeed, there are no lesbians in the band. Three gay men, one straight man and a straight woman joined together to name themselves after a lesbian sexual position. This was not appropriation, but translation, bringing difference into the straightstream.

Queer theory is currently undergoing a period of correction. Dennis Altman has been focused on transforming global queerness as it moves from the United States.<sup>87</sup> The desire to avoid universalizing claims of queerness, and the attendant neo-colonial criticisms, has produced a productive body of work.<sup>88</sup> How gay, lesbian and bisexual claims for social justice align with other political movements, particularly for disability, sexism and ageism, is more difficult to track. Zygmunt Bauman argued that “‘identity’ means standing out: being different, and through that difference unique – and so the search for identity cannot but divide and separate.”<sup>89</sup> Therefore, the Scissor Sisters are not only nostalgic in their mobilization of space and time, through their imagining of New York and their summoning of a lost pre-AIDS world, but also identity. They configure a “fantasy of a harmonious, homogeneous community.”<sup>90</sup> This space is not located in a real landscape, but is summoned through a popular cultural soundscape.

Metaphors of understanding and comprehension are often visual, using words such as enlightenment or illumination. Yet sound constructs spaces that are far more fluid and fluent than the eye allows. The limitations of the eye are rarely mentioned. Sound remains important because, as Bull and Back have argued “it enables individuals to create intimate, manageable and aestheticized spaces to inhabit.”<sup>91</sup> September 11 in New York was a visual moment.<sup>92</sup> The city summoned by the Scissor Sisters is a soundscape, able to transgress the endless looped return to an image when airplanes crashed into the towers. Sound – gently and carefully – reshapes social experiences. Aural culture remains a carrier of memory. Musically, New York will always mean more than a visual moment of terrorism. The Scissor Sisters encourage plural representations of self and sexuality, where straight and gay, men and women, can dialogue and translate differences.

The Scissor Sisters make popular music bigger, incorporating cabaret, drag shows and masquerade balls. Queen, Elton John, Liza Minnelli and Led Zeppelin all sashay through Scissorland. At their most incisive and disturbing, they transformed Pink Floyd's ‘Comfortably Numb’ from druggy prog rock to camp disco. The notion of putting surfer guitar rhythms to the track was a reflexive and considered deployment of music history. The cover track was so carefully conceived that the original is displaced from pop history. The point though is that they were not a cover band. This release was followed by “Laura” – out feeting Little Feat – and “Take Your Mama,” which showed what would be happened if Alabama had gone out more.

To harmonize such sonic collisions requires Ana Matronic to MC life over the rainbow. She continues the history of difficult women in popular music, like Laurie Anderson, Siouxsie Sioux,<sup>93</sup> Dusty Springfield and Helen Shapiro. Transgressive, loud women occupy space like few other cultural figures. While the strength of women is encouraged when the economy is moving through a period of growth, during conservative times, frailty becomes the grammar of the feminine.<sup>94</sup> Women too often speak man-made language. Ana Matronic lip synched to a different history, appropriating and transforming aurality and corporeality:

I used to do straight up lip syncs from John Spencer Blues Explosion to Rolling Stones to Patty Smith to Siouxsie to Etta James ... It was about a year before Scissor Sisters' first performance that I met Jake ... in walks this guy with a nude body stocking, covered in blood with a coat hanger coming out, and that was Jake. He was dressed as a late-term, back alley abortion and did this dance to the Showgirls soundtrack.<sup>95</sup>

For this meeting with Shears, Ana Matronic was dressed as an Andy Warhol Factory reject. Clearly, Ana Matronic is a corporeal I-Pod, able to download and select any song from the history of popular music and talk about it.<sup>96</sup> She is loud, aggressive, dances well and does not limit her body size to the taste of tabloids. She mocks the thin, gaunt and quiet, rewarding the smart and sexual. For example, the PirateKing reported what happened when the Scissor Sisters and Elton John dueted at the post-Oscars party. Ana offered a commentary on the carbohydrate-starved, thin and coutured crowd, providing a feminist equivalent to John Lennon's request that the affluent audience at the Beatles' Royal Command Performance "rattle your jewelry" rather than clap

I just saw Ana on TV. She decided to eat Elton John's flower arrangement. Sharon Osbourne told her that she'd throw up, Ana replied something along the lines of 'Not as much as those bitches in the audience!' Is it me or does Ana seem a little intoxicated?<sup>97</sup>

Ana Matronic literally plays the crowd. Riveting, sexual, dangerous and provocative, she represents everything the New Right fears would happen to women if they delayed marriage and mixed with the wrong people. The other band members are aware of her role. Babydaddy described her as "the major connection between the crowd and what we do."<sup>98</sup> Jake Shears confirmed that "what Ana Matronic does on the stage with this band has no precedent. She is like no one else."<sup>99</sup> She tells the truths that cut up neo-conservative assumptions about religion, nation, family and femininity.

This popular music is riveting to watch. A generational surge is cutting up the beige lifestyle programming, scissoring and remixing house music and prog rock, funk and punk, trash and the sparkling ephemera of pop's recycling bin. There is simply more pop's history for this generation to access, and they are working well with this database. 2004 was the pivotal year of this new music, expressed best through the 2005 Brit Awards. Of the seventeen trophies given out on the February 9 ceremony, ten went to debut acts. Steve Gallant, product director for HMV argued that "most of those winners hadn't released an album 12 months ago."<sup>100</sup> The Scissor Sisters won three awards – the international categories for best group, breakthrough act and album. Franz Ferdinand<sup>101</sup> was the year's most nominated act, and they won two awards from the five nominations. Keane won British breakthrough act and best British album for Hopes and Fears. In other words, the three multiple award winners were all debut albums.

The Scissor Sisters have created smart popular culture for a dumb time. They believe in popular culture. They do not hide behind authenticating mock-credibility of rock music, or bury discussions of politics in home renovation or cooking programmes. As Jake Shears confirmed:

I don't think we're afraid to play anything ... Pop should be meaningful again. It shouldn't be a dirty word. We're not making fun of anything we do and there's no way we're going to sound manufactured. Our songs are accessible enough to break through barriers.<sup>102</sup>

Because of their pop literacy, they have a currency far beyond a world city scarred by terrorism. At this year's Brit Awards, they beat all comers, including U2. Their managing director at Polydor, David Joseph, stated that "people have responded to the brilliant songs, the irony and, as the band would say, the great shoes."<sup>103</sup> The most poignant moment of the event was when the Scissor Sisters collected their award from Siouxi Sioux. The audience did not know the reputation of this famous punk icon, and rumbled their confusion and boredom when she was introduced. But the Scissor Sisters knew, and acknowledged their history: "Without Siouxi Sioux, there would be no Ana Matronic." They are right to remember this past.<sup>104</sup> The Scissor Sisters remind us of a time when George W. Bush, Tony Blair and John Howard's version of a family had some competition, and terror was triggered, not by planes slamming into buildings, but the threat of running mascara. This is nostalgia with an agenda. This is the future of popular music. The Scissor Sisters got there before the rest of us

### Notes

1. I. Welsh, "Foreword," from P. Vasili, The First Black Footballer, (London: Frank Cass, 1998), p. xii

2. Babydaddy, "Return to Oz," from We are Scissor Sisters and So Are You, (Polydor, 2004)

3. Julian Marszalek confirmed that "Much like The Darkness, Scissor Sisters have tapped into a previously unhip genre and cherry picked the finest moments to crystallise them into something fresh and new without resorting to the cheap tricks and gimmicks of parody and caricature," from "Scissor Sisters – the Astoria," XFM Online, <http://ixfm.fimc.net/Article.asp?id=22496>, accessed on March 19, 2005

4. Although Neo-Conservatism is used in the singular throughout this paper, I acknowledge the diversity of speeches, articles, papers and ideologies included in Irwin Stelzer's Neo-Conservatism, (London: Atlantic Books, 2004). He states in his introduction that "there is no such thing as a neoconservative 'movement,'" p. 4. Ironically though, the anti-collectivity and ideology of individuality are unifying tropes.

5. Ana Matronic is Ana Lynch. Babydaddy is Scot Hoffman. Del Marquis is Derek Gruen. Paddy Boom is Patrick Seacor. Jake Shears is Jason Sellards.

6. As one journalist recognized, "No focus group would ever have arrived at this rabble. Watch them live and you'll see them lurch between Hi-NRG disco and stadium rock ballads without pausing. Amazingly, it works," from Scissor Sisters, s1play, [http://www.s1play.com/livemusic/livemusic\\_features.cgi?edl\\_id=37643](http://www.s1play.com/livemusic/livemusic_features.cgi?edl_id=37643), accessed on March 19, 2005.

7. Jake Shears and Paddy Boom, "Live in Brighton," from We are Scissor Sisters and So Are You, (Polydor, 2004).

8. This trend was followed by the band that beat the Scissor Sisters as best international band at the NME awards. The Killers were originally from Nevada, but their musical influences are John Lennon, David Bowie and Stephen Morrissey. Please refer to "Fans crown Franz," The Guardian, February 18, 2005, p. 9.

9. Ana Matronic, "Live in Brighton."

10. Irving Kristol, in "A conservative welfare state," argued that "the key to a conservative reform would be (a) to discourage young women from having an illegitimate child in the first place and (b) to discriminate between 'welfare mothers' and 'mothers on welfare.' Such discrimination must have a clear moral basis," from Stelzer, op. cit., p. 147.

11. James Wilson and George Kelling, in "Broken windows: the police and neighborhood safety," discuss "the fear of being bothered by disorderly people," in Stelzer, *ibid.*, p. 152.

12. The issue of gay marriage is located in a complicated nexus of conservative and neo-conservative ideologies. For a discussion of this confluence, please refer to Adam Wolfson, "Conservatives and Neoconservatives," Stelzer, *ibid.*, pp. 215-231.

13. F. Tonkiss, "The ethics of indifference," International Journal of Cultural Studies, Vol. 6, No. 3, 2003, pp. 297-311.

14. Tonkiss, p. 307.

15. Peter Hall, in Cities and Civilization, (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1998), listed the characteristics of a creative city: they are chaotic and structurally unstable, they undergo social and economic transformations, and are affluent, but draw their creativity from social outsiders who often react to social exclusion. Hall continued this argument through his article of cultural mapping, stating that "creative cities ... are places of great social and intellectual turbulence: not comfortable places at all," from "Creative cities and economic development," Urban Studies, Vol. 37, No. 4, 2000, p. 646

16. J. O'Connor, "A special kind of city knowledge," Paper for the Manchester Institute for Popular Culture, Manchester Metropolitan University, 2004, p. 4.

17. Please refer to T. Richardson and O. Jenson, "Mobility and power in networked European space," Paper for Urban Vulnerability and Network Failure: Constructions and Experiences of Emergencies, Crises and Collapse, SURF, Manchester, April 29-30, 2004.

18. M. Grieco and F. Raje, "Stranded mobility and the marginalization of low income communities," paper for the Urban Vulnerability and Network Failure, SURF, Manchester, April 29-30, 2004.

19. A. Kronker stated that "the working class is grounded in localized space; the technocratic class wills itself to float away in the virtual zone of hyperspace," from "Virtual capitalism," in S. Aronowitz, B. Martinsons and M. Menser (eds), Techno Science and Cyberculture, (New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 175. The argument in this paper is that the Scissor Sisters gained mobility, not because they were the technocratic class and mobilized digitized media. Instead, their strategy was to market trans-localism by constructing an imagined New York and exporting it to the United Kingdom.

20. In many ways, the Scissor Sisters' New York imagining is a confirmation of Edward Soja's argument that "thinking spatially makes a difference .... Putting critical spatial thinking first, foregrounding the spatial with respect to the social and the historical dimensions of our lives, can result in significant new insights that challenge much that has been taken for granted in history, geography, and social thought more generally," Postmetropolis, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004: 2000), p. 20.

21. Z. Bauman, Identity, (Cambridge: Polity, 2004), p. 24.

22. The role and place of punk in the Scissor Sisters discourse is uneven in its application. Their songs are well structured, display high production values, and celebrate the

great enemies of punk, progressive and glam rock. However there is a self starting 'do it yourself' ideology in the band that is almost a form of gay entrepreneurship. The early ensemble of the Scissor Sisters, with Jake Shears, Babydaddy and Ana Matronic, played in Lux, a small rock club with a mixed audience of indie kids and trannies. Jake Shears remembers that "Kids would get on stage and perform a song that they'd written that week on their laptops," Return to Oz. Instead of the famous three chords taught in Sniffin Glue, mobile digital technology became the transformative mechanism for self and social expression. It was an electronic(a) twist on the punk ideology and aesthetic.

23. K. Empire, "Never mind the Sex Pistols," The Observer, April 17, 2005, p. 17.

24. I particularly note the importance of Simon Reynolds' Rip it up and start again: Post-Punk 1978-1984 (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), for a strong analysis of this musical period.

25. Jake Shears was employed as a go-go dancer. He stated that "I'm so grateful that I went through that phase of dancing on bars for dollars ... It made me totally unashamed to go crazy. Once you've taken your clothes off in front of hundreds of people, things get a lot easier," from "Scissor Sisters," contactmusic.com, <http://www.contactmusic.com/new/artist.nsf/0/EDA895240E7596680256EAE003C5>.

26. Babydaddy, "Return to Oz."

27. Del Macquis, "Return to Oz."

28. Stanley Aronowitz's fascinating study How Class Works, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003) reported that "in the United States, where the social safety net has all but disappeared for the working poor, two million children suffer from malnutrition, and hunger is more widespread at a time when the official jobless rate hovered around 4 percent, unprecedented since the first half of the 1950s," p. 30.

29. For an outstanding presentation of the consequences of this argument, please refer to Stanley Aronowitz and Jonathan Culter's edited collection Post-work, (London: New Fetter Lane, 1998).

30. Irvine Welsh stated in his interview with Steve Redhead that "People who are in work have no time for anything else but work. They have no mental space to accommodate anything else but work. Whereas people who are outside the system will always find ways of amusing themselves. Even if they are materially disadvantaged they'll still find ways of coping, getting by and making their own entertainment," in S. Redhead, "Post-punk junk," Repetitive Beat Generation, (Edinburgh: Rebel Inc, 2000), p. 146.

31. Paddy Boom, "Return to Oz."

32. M. Beeson and A. Bellamy, "Globalization, security and international order after 11 September," Australian Journal of Politics and History, Vol. 49, No. 3, 2003, p. 353.

33. Jenny Hocking wrote an important analysis of the role of language in the war against terror. Please refer to "Counter-terrorism and the criminalization of politics: Australia's new security powers of detention, prosecution and control," Australian Journal of Politics and History, Vol. 49, No. 3, 2003, pp. 355-371.

34. Z. Sardar and M. Davies, Why Do People Hate America?, (Cambridge: Icon, 2004: 2002), p. xi.

35. This is what Sardar and Davies described as "its voices of conscience, its smaller structures, its dissenting communities, intellectuals, writers and thinkers concerned about the



plight of the rest of the world and seeking to limit American hyperpower and hyperimperialism," *ibid.*, p. 210.

36. Ana Matronic, "Return to Oz."

37. T. DeLay, from G. Elliott, "Bush distracted by ruckus at top of the hill," *The Weekend Australian*, April 23-24, 2005, p. 16.

38. *ibid.*

39. Similarly, Marion Maddox offers an evocative presentation of God under Howard (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2005). She explores how the religious right operates in Australian politics. She confirmed that the Methodist (and later Anglican) John Howard's ideologies have had an impact. She stated that, "by penalizing some kinds of families and ruling some kinds of love second class, governments can encourage other families into frightened retreat. By sponsoring show trials to ridicule non-Christian beliefs, they can encourage us to see money as having the right to trample spiritual values," p. 318.

40. Ana Matronic, "Live in Brighton."

41. In "4 Play," the Channel 4 documentary on the band, Del Marquis stated that "My supreme guitar hero is Billy Duffy from The Cult, who I have stalked, and Johnny Marr from the Smiths. I haven't managed to stalk him yet. I did stalk Robert Smith of the Cure. I did stalk Will Sergeant of Echo and the Bunnymen," from *We are Scissor Sisters and So Are You*.

42. Babydaddy stated of Brian Eno, "It would be really amazing to pick his brain," *Return to Oz*.

43. "Later ... with Jools Holland,"  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/later/interviews/scissorsisters.shtml>.

44. Ana Matronic and Jake Shears, "Live in Brighton."

45. Babydaddy, Ana Matronic and Jake Shears, "Return to Oz."

46. Ana Matronic stated that "it doesn't matter what profession you want to join, if you want to be at the peak or the pinnacle of your profession, you go to New York," from "Return to Oz."

47. Jake Shears recognized that "there's so many people doing so many different things. You can be friends with someone who is an academic over there and an hour later you're talking to a porn star," from "Return to Oz."

48. Babydaddy remembers that "I went to New York never with the idea of escape, it was with the idea of joining these people, but bringing something back to the place that we came from," from "Return to Oz."

49. Phil Wood confirmed that "great cities throughout history have held an attraction for outsiders drawn by both the urges to make something of their lives and the freedom to lose themselves in the crowd, and it is from these restless, marginal groups that many of the social, economic and cultural breakthroughs that shape our life have emerged," *Society Guardian*, *The Guardian*, February 23, 2005, p. 9. Wood, who is a partner in Comedia, the think tank on intercultural cities, confirmed the significance of cultural diversity in the developments of urbanity. His two examples were potent. Isambard Brunel, Britain's greatest engineer, had an English mother, but a father who came to Britain as a refugee from revolutionary France. Wood also expressed the importance of Bristol's history as a port city involved in the slave trade in

developing its two-toned musical history, captured through Portishead, Massive Attack, Tricky and Roni Size.

50. For example, Dunedin's 'sound' is associated with the jangly guitars, Seattle with grunge and Bristol with dub.

51. There is also a significant relationship between New Order and the Scissor Sisters. When asked if the band are "a gay Joy Division," Ana Matronic replied that "I'd say more a gay New Order," from "Scissor Sisters," s1play, [http://www.s1play.com/livemusic/livemusic\\_features.cgi?edl\\_id=37643](http://www.s1play.com/livemusic/livemusic_features.cgi?edl_id=37643), accessed on March 19, 2005. Considering this influence, it is no surprise that Ana Matronic supplied vocals on the New Order album *Waiting for the Sirens' Call*, (Warner Brothers, 2005).

52. Ana Matronic, "Return to Oz."

53. Therefore, the disciplined mobilization of a pre-AIDs New York critiques Bauman's argument that:"the shrinking of space abolishes the flow of time. The inhabitants of the first world live in a perpetual present, going through a succession of episodes hygienically insulated from their past as well as their future ... Residents of the first world live in time; space does not matter for them.," from Globalization, p. 88.

54. Ana Matronic, "Return to Oz."

55. Paddy Boom, "Return to Oz."

56. Jake Shears, "Scissor Sisters," [contactmusic.com](http://contactmusic.com).

57. Ana Matronic, "Return to Oz."

58. Del Marquis, "Return to Oz."

59. Jake Shears, "Return to Oz."

60. Inversion is a significant tactic of the disempowered. Jonathan Katz, in his book The Invention of Heterosexuality, (New York: Plume, 1996), based his research project around the maxim that "heterosexuality wasn't only 'enforced,' it was 'invented,'" p. 11.

61. This was also Eve Sedgwick's project in Tendencies, (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 10-11. She states, "the making historically visible of heterosexuality is difficult because, under its institutional pseudonyms such as Inheritance, Marriage, Dynasty, Family, Domesticity, and Population, heterosexuality has been permitted to masquerade so fully as history itself – when it has not presented itself as the totality of Romance." Sedgwick's use of capitalization confirms that we must question the ideological assumptions and universality masked by the deployment of these terms.

62. A. Doty and C. Creekmur (ed), Out in Culture, (New York: Continuum, 1995).

63. S. Maddison, Fags, Hags and Queer Sisters, (London: Macmillan Press, 2000), p. 10.

64. Babydaddy, "Scissor Sisters Forum - Band," posted January 10, 2005, Scissor Sisters Website, <http://www.scissorsisters.com/board/viewtopic.php?t=5641>.

65. "Scissor Sister Forum - Band," posted January 10, 2005, <http://www.scissorsisters.com/board/viewtopic.php?t=5641>.

66. Ana Matronic and Babydaddy, "4 Play."
67. Unnamed fan, "Live in Brighton."
68. Ana Matronic, "Live in Brighton."
69. For example in the "Return to Oz" lyric, which concludes their debut album, Skeksis are mentioned, the creatures from the Jim Henson film, The Dark Crystal.
70. "Return to Oz."
71. Ana Matronic and Jake Shears, "Live in Brighton."
72. For a broader discussion of the relationship between popular cultural literacies and Generation X, please refer to Tara Brabazon, From Revolution to Revolution: Generation X, Popular Culture, Popular Memory, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).
73. Jake Shears and Ana Matronic, "Live at Brighton."
74. It is important to note that heterosexuality is not 'outside' or excluded from queerness. Judith Butler was inclusive in Bodies that Matter, (New York: Routledge, 1993). She defined queer as "the discursive rallying point for younger lesbians and gay men and, in yet other contexts, lesbian interventions and, in yet other contexts, for bisexuals and straights for whom the term expresses an affiliation with antihomophobic politics," p. 20.
75. Andrew Benjamin described this desire to translate. He stated that "first it involves the idea of recovery; of the discovery of meaning, or truth, and the subsequent re-expression of what has been recovered. Second this understanding of translation also involves the idea of free exchange; of an unmediated and an unrestrained economy in which signifiers are the object of exchange," from Translation and the Nature of Philosophy: A New Theory of Words, (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 60.
76. L. Cannold, What, No Baby? (Fremantle: Curtin University Books / Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2005).
77. *ibid.*, p. 13.
78. C. Thomas, "Straight with a twist," p. 17.
79. S. Jackson, "Heterosexuality and feminist theory," from D. Richardson (ed.), Theorising Heterosexuality, (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1996), p. 21.
80. M. Cho, "I'm a fag-hag," I'm the one that I want, [http://margaretho.com/audio\\_visual/audio\\_visual.htm](http://margaretho.com/audio_visual/audio_visual.htm).
81. M. Cho, "Gay Marriage," National Public Radio, November 19, 2003.
82. David Johnson, "The time of translation," from D. Johnson and S. Michaelsen (eds.), Border Secrets: An Introduction', Border Theory: The Limits of Cultural Politics (Minneapolis and London, University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 146.
83. V. Evangelista and T. Brabazon, "Queer Sisters: The Politics of Fag-haggery," Antithesis, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1995, p. 70.
84. Evangelista and Brabazon, p. 71.

85. M. Featherstone, "Automobilities," Theory, Culture & Society, Vol. 21, No. 4/5, 2004, p. 1.
86. Ana Matronic and Jake Shears, "Live at Brighton."
87. D. Altman, *Global Sex*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2001). Also, please refer to his "Queer Centres and Peripheries," Cultural Studies Review, Vol. 10, No. 1, March 2004.
88. In the last three years, remarkable and evocative work has emerged that intertwines questions of race, difference and sexuality. Of particular note is Ruth Vaita (ed.), Queering India, (New York: Routledge, 2002). Further examples include Héctor Carrillo, The Night is Young: Sexuality in Mexico in the Time of AIDS, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2002); Alyssa Howe's "Undressing the Universal Queer Subject", City and Society 14, no. 2, August 2002, pp. 237-279; and Tom Boellstorff, "Indonesian Gay and Lesbian Subjectivities and Ethnography in an Already Globalised World", American Ethnologist 30, no. 2, 2002, pp. 225-242.
89. Z. Bauman, Community, (Cambridge: Polity, 2003 2001), p. 16.
90. L. Secomb, "Interrupting Mythic Community," Cultural Studies Review, Vol. 9, No. 1, May 2003, p. 85.
91. M. Bull and L. Back, "Introduction: Into sound," from M. Bull and L. Back (eds.), The Auditory Culture Reader, (Oxford: Berg, 2004), p. 1.
92. Bull and Back confirmed that "The attack on the World Trade Centre on 11 September 2001 was experienced as a global event in real time. What is significant is that the attacks were witnessed visually and endlessly replayed on camera via television and in cyberspace. It was something that was seen. Now the date itself has come to signify the quality of what happened on that bright New York morning as well as signaling the start of an epoch," from "Introduction: Into Sound," from Bull and Back, *ibid.*, p. 2.
93. The Scissor Sisters played at the Winchester Homelands Dance Festival in 2004. Ana Matronic was dressed in a shirt featuring a picture of Siouxsie Sioux. Before a song, she stated that "As you can see, I love an English woman who inspired me to be a badass rebel fierce bitch ... This one's for all the ladies in the audience like me," from "Homelands 2004 rocks," NME, <http://strongbowrooms.nme.com/features/story.php?feature=21>.
94. C. Dowling has monitored this history of women's bodies through The Frailty Myth, (New York: Random, 2000).
95. Ana Matronic, "Return to Oz."
96. Her interests are beyond quirky: "She loves Siouxsie Sioux, Einsturzende Neubauten and Fleetwood Mac's Tusk," "Scissor Sisters," s1play. Einsturzende Neubauten was a particularly fascinating choice. Not only were they 'assaulting' in their movements between music and noise, but the singer Blixa Bargeld famously delivered cabaret commentary throughout performances, similarly to Ana Matronic. Please refer to Stephen Dalton's commentary on a live performance by Einsturzende Neubauten in London in "Calm after the Sturm," The Times, April 7, 2005, p. 21.
97. Pirateking, ""The Oscars, Elton John Duet with the Scissor Sisters," Scissor Sisters Message Board, February 28, 2005, <http://www.scissorsisters.com/board/viewtopic.php?t=7207>.
98. Babydaddy, "Return to Oz."

99. Jake Shears, "Return to Oz."

100. S. Gallant from L. Brandle and P. Sexton, "New Faces Take Top Honors at 25th Brits," Billboard, February 19, 2005, p. 8.

101. The connection between Franz Ferdinand and the Scissor Sisters continue, with the Sisters recording a cover version of "Take me out," for a Radio 1 Session. As with "Comfortably Numb," they transformed it into a burlesque singalong. Ana Matronic confirmed the connection with the Scottish band, believing that "I think it's the approach that's similar ... They're very thoughtful and into odd, quirky things," Please refer to "Scissor Sisters," s1play.

102. J. Shears, "Scissor Sisters," [contactmusic.com](http://contactmusic.com).

103. D. Joseph, "Scissors Help Universal Top Award List," Music Week, February 19, 2005, p. 4.

104. The fans also acknowledged her generosity. Robbiefett stated that he "thought it was great of Ana to publicly thank Siouxsie at the Brit Awards. Nice to hear one band I like recognize another band that I like," posted February 20, 2005, "Sister Siouxsie," Scissor Sisters Message Board, <http://www.scissorsisters.com/board/viewtopic.php?t=6975>.

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