The Partial Performer

Meets The Partial Spectator:

Transgressing the frame in popular entertainments

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DEDICATION

In memory of John Carroll, for your faith, joi de’ vivre, and for daring me to play in a new world, that transformed my life from the inside out.
The research documentary, *A Tent and A Show* (Appendix) is strictly for research purposes only and not for commercial broadcast. Third-party images, music and archival footage sourced under Creative Commons Attribution- ShareAlike (3.0). All rights reserved by the author under the *Copyright Act, 1968* and *Fair Dealing for the purpose of research or study (s.103C).*
Hi Kate,

The SEHRC has decided to approve your application, “Cultural Complexity: The Famous Spiegeltent and Alternative Theatre in Australia.” The committee would like to thank you for the effort you put into preparing the application, and your patience during the review process. Best of luck with the research.

Regards,
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CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at Charles Sturt University or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgment is made in the thesis. Any contribution made to the research by colleagues with whom I have worked at Charles Sturt University or elsewhere during my candidature is fully acknowledged. I agree that this thesis be accessible for the purpose of study and research in accordance with the normal conditions established by the Executive Director, Library Services or nominee, for the care, loan and reproduction of theses.

Signed
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ABSTRACT

The theory of transgression in performance developed in this research introduces a new dimension of the performative experience into the study and staging of performance. Drawing from the disciplines of performance studies, theatrical event theory and consumer culture theory this thesis investigates spectator/performer dynamics and the staging of performance in other space/s.

An innovative approach to practice–based research –presented as a research documentary constructs the theory of transgression focusing on The Famous Spiegeltent, and its cabaret/circus show La Clique. The Famous Spiegeltent is an antique travelling Belgian ‘mirror’ tent, which programmes new circus/cabaret style entertainment at Fringe festivals where performances, drawn from the tradition of popular entertainments, are staged. At Fringe festivals performative interactions between performers and spectators occurs on and offstage via scripted and unscripted spontaneous performance, making it a unique ‘stage’ for the investigation of transgression of both performers and spectators.

The thesis analyses transgression in the staging performance from a socio-spatial perspective using frame theory to examine the theatrical frame of the site at which The Famous Spiegeltent is often located, the Fringe Festival, and genre analysis to identify historic relationships between transgression and the genres of cabaret, burlesque, circus and vaudeville and carnivalesque in medieval carnival. It examines the liminality of the spectator/performer dynamics to understand the transitions between these two states of being when staged in other spaces. Employing the theory of heterotopia the thesis positions The Famous Spiegeltent as space that frames
encounters with otherness via performing and spectating. Investigating the contexts of the theatrical event, surrounding the actual performance, (rather than the performance), it proposes that the performer/spectator interactions constitute a role-based communication called ‘spiegeltent performance’. The thesis then develops the concept of ‘partial experience’, introduced by consumer culture theory, to further analyse the performer/spectator dynamics as a ‘partial experience’ of ‘otherness’ via the blurring of roles between performers and spectator. ‘Partial experience’ is the term prescribed to these liminoid encounters between performers and spectators, where not only the spectator becomes a partial performer (well documented in the literature), but also the performer becomes a partial spectator. The interrogation of the staging of the spectator-performer relationship from this new dimension is significant because, it illustrates a two-way blurring of role, hence experience transgresses toward otherness revealing the complexity of the spectator/performer and its relationship to space, identity, and community.

The ‘partial experience’ of other performed in heterotopic space sits in the liminoid realm, generates symbolic experience for participants, and operates as ‘an-other’ performance, as well as a performance of ‘other’. The reciprocal experience of performing and spectating is positioned as a transformative experience for participants that manifests as the transgression toward otherness, and leads to the creation of cultural narratives and the formation of temporary communities that embody notions of communitas or shared experience.
Our work should be nourished by subversion that projects us beyond our professional identity, which acts as a wall, both protecting and at the same time imprisoning us. The performance sows a seed that grows in the memory of every spectator, and every spectator grows with this seed (Barba, 2002, p. 17).

It was forty degrees at 2 am, on a Tuesday night in the summer of 2006. I was sitting outside The Famous Spiegeltent in The Garden of Unearthly Delights at the Adelaide Fringe festival, surrounded by fellow performing artists. We were celebrating. Street performers shouted on a pitch over the fence; a glamorous, female trapeze artist, Ms. Flea flew over head in a sequined leotard; sideshow shock-jocks breathed water through their eyes; two grotesque Rabelaisian clowns, Wacko and Blotto hung from a tiny caravan window, trading insults, whilst hitting one another over the head with plastic mallets and commentating on the passers by. Aesthetically ‘The Garden’ evoked the mood and style of a travelling carnival: I entered from the street via a curved entrance, crossing a threshold into a circular area; a rig for aerial performance loomed over head; alternative cafés selling chai tea and world trade goods sat opposite open-fronted novelty bars sponsored by Becks beer. Three main circus tent structures were situated around the edge. The Umbrella Revolution, a traditional red-roofed, black and white walled big top circus tent, seating between 150-400; The Bosco Theatre, an original Dutch –Kermiss tent, built in 1909 with a 200 seat
capacity; and making its debut in Adelaide that year, The Famous Spiegeltent—an art deco, 300 seat, Belgian, mirror-tent, built in the 1920s. Owned by Australian theatrical entrepreneur and jazz musician David Bates, ‘The Tent’, or ‘The Famous’ as the cast and crew I came to know during that festival referred to it, annually tours the Summer Arts Festival circuit in the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand. The new vaudeville-cabaret La Clique had previewed that night at 10 pm in ‘The Famous’ (herein I shall use this abbreviation) and it rapidly became the place to be at the Fringe.

**Performing research: From spectator to practitioner**

Encountering a sub-culture of artists at The Famous Spiegeltent who worked specifically in alternative forms of comedic performance was a curious experience. Experimental theatre Director Eugenio Barba argues that at the origin of an artist’s creative path is often a ‘wound’, indicative of some kind of separation. He suggests that during a creative career an artist will return to this ‘intimate lesion’ time and again, revisiting it. This revisiting is not concerned with performance, theory or the urge to communicate. “It is rather the desire to rediscover a sensation of intensity, a lost wholeness: In order to meet myself, I must measure myself against the

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1 The use of the word famous in the title of the tent differentiates it from the seven other original tents still in use in Europe and the United States, as well as numerous replicas. These include the La Gaiete, Palais Romantique, Le Moulin Rouge owned and restored by, the Klessens a Belgium family business who have been crafting these tents for five generations since the 1920s, and whom David Bates employs to help construct ‘The Famous’. 
other-the other within me and the other outside me” (Barba, 2002, p. 17). In the other time/space moment I inhabited that night in the spectacular environment of ‘The Famous’, I met a long lost self, an-other self and consequently my own creative ‘wound’ was unexpectedly rediscovered. The intensity of being there amongst a melting pot of performing artists, acrobats, comedians and musicians was uncanny as though I had re-connected with a community I had never met, one both familiar and strange. A community bound by a deliberate otherness.

In my other life, as a casting agent for television commercials, difference was not celebrated. The quest was for sameness, for faces to sell an Anglicised version of reality, and the difference between the two environments was vast. What was similar however was my attraction to worlds concerned with the business of make-believe because I am intrigued by ambiguity, seeking openness to more than one interpretation of meaning.

I was at the Adelaide Fringe to act in a two-handed comedy, ‘Bangers and Mash’, which I had co-written and produced. I had stepped from one life to another: From behind the camera, casting actors in roles for television and film, to the world of alternative theatre performance. A closer examination of my reasons for embarking on this research journey revealed that I am preoccupied with boundaries, particularly with slipping between, over, across, through, and around them. My repeated use of words featuring ‘trans’, Latin for ‘across’ or ‘beyond’, such as transgression, transforms and transitory evidences this preoccupation. Trans indicates a shift from one place to another, an-other state of place, and it is this movement from one space or state to an-other that is at the heart of my analysis of the staging of performance at ‘The Famous’. I have spent a career immersing myself in
environments that disrupt, challenge, and question, creating work that slips between performance genres such as; cabaret, conventional and musical theatre; stand-up and sketch comedy. My arrival at the tent signaled the crossing of a threshold that would ultimately lead me to blur boundaries between methods and concepts of practice and performance.

Autobiographical performance theorist Deirdre Heddon prefers the term ‘beginnings’ to locate herself in her research (2008, p. 1). My approach, like Heddon’s, is to tell a non-linear story that identifies ‘beginnings’ or origins as its starting point. Origins; from the Latin oriri ‘to rise’, are also referred to throughout the thesis in relation to the performative origins of the tent, the performance genres associated with La Clique, and their influence the staging of performance. I have located the origins of this research in Australia to acknowledge the roots of the owner of the tent David Bates and Creative Producer, Haylock, along with the vast majority of the crew and house staff who are Australian. I also encountered the show and subsequently conducted the twelve interviews at the tent during three Australian festivals seasons featuring La Clique. The show itself is not Australian, as the performers come from Europe, the U.S, U.K, New Zealand and Canada, and the tent was created in Belgium, therefore the research does not explore historical perspectives about the genres of Australian alternative circus, vaudeville or burlesque performances for analysis

My autobiographical origins mirror Heddon’s notion of ‘beginnings’, by revisiting the origins of the research, like Heddon, I reconnected with Brecht’s concept of verfremdungseffekt; making the familiar strange. Making the familiar strange involved the process of observing my
experience as spectator and transforming it into research; noticing and
questioning the act of seeing and participating in theatre performance to find
critical distance. This process influenced the methods used. By re-viewing
my origins, I am re-presenting them. By making what was familiar, strange
I found the critical distance needed to shift between the voice of the
researcher and practitioner. Using the subjective/interpretive ‘I’, I am
borrowing Victor Turner’s (1982) notion of liminality to illustrate the ‘in-
between’ state that I experienced as spectator; I was physically there, and by
participating I was encouraged to ‘go somewhere else’, to transgress to ‘an-
other’ state in-between performing and spectating. To use the words of the
Emcee and Creative Producer Brett Haylock, I ran away to the circus…for
the night.
ONE INTRODUCTION

‘The Famous’ appears in a city just like any other travelling circus tent: it arrives, sets-up, stays for a short time, and then disappears, as if it were never there. Yet, The Famous Spiegeltent is different. Spiegel is Dutch for mirror, and mirror tents—spiegeltents—originated in the Flemish part of Belgium’s north, where they travelled with carnivals as mobile dance halls. Wood and glass craftsmen, Oscar Dols Moor and Louis Goor, hand crafted The Famous Spiegeltent in approximately 1920. It is one of eight original spiegeltents still in use at arts, food and wine festivals in Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States, however since commencing this thesis spiegeltents have increased in popularity and multiple replicas are now in operation. ‘She’, (‘The Famous’ has been affectionately anthropomorphised by the owner), holds five hundred and twenty eight patrons, three hundred and fifty if they are seated, is lined with art deco bevelled mirrors, coloured glass, and a parquetry circular dance floor. Its interior is bordered by intimate booths, framed by a ballooning velvet canopied ceiling, and anchored by a magnificent fin de siècle crystal chandelier.

Owner, David Bates who refers to himself as its ‘custodian’, (rather than its owner), claims he ‘fell in love’ with ‘The Famous’ when he first performed in it the late 1980s. To construct the antique tent, Bates calls on The Klessens’, a fourth-generation Belgian family- spiegeltent experts- who craft and restore tents. Construction time is about twelve hours with three thousand five hundred pieces of interlocking wood, glass, canvas, aluminium, and steel fitted together without a single bolt or nail. Before it was purchased by the Newcastle based brewery in the 1980s, ‘The Famous’ lay dormant from the post-war years in the 1950s and 60s, and during the explosion of disco in the 1970s, (despite remaining stalwart venues in the German Varieté scene throughout this time until the present day). In the early 1990s, Edinburgh Book Festival hired it, hosting promotional events

Bates specializes in creating theatre in non-traditional spaces, using cabaret as point of departure; in Edinburgh he programmed acts that merged comedy and alternative music, complemented by the aesthetic beauty of the tent. The first season was commercially successful, and after four years touring the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand, he purchased it in 2000, when he hired Brett Haylock to manage it. In 2004, Creative Producer, Brett Haylock, gathered a ‘family’ acts from fetish clubs, gay clubs alternative cabarets and street performances to feature in a late night event known as Club Spiegelt. Inspired by its success, Haylock conceived a new show that debuted at Edinburgh Fringe called La Clique. A riotous and risqué vaudeville-cabaret show, it evolved into an Olivier award-winning, internationally famous, standing room only hit, that is still playing to packed houses world-wide.

La Clique is structured as a standard vaudeville show, featuring a string of un-related variety acts that display comic and artistic interpretations of circus, burlesque, cabaret and vaudeville entertainment. Although a subversive tilt is added to the tone of the show by framing “a good night out” with the programming of eclectic, highly-skilled, sexy performers. Seven of the fifteen acts in the La Clique ‘stable’ appear on stage each night, there is no narrative structure, or theme to link them, and recorded music is used between, whilst the Emcee, welcomes the crowd, encourages the spectators to interact and introduces each act. The Emcee in La Clique is also the Manager of the tent. When it began, it was Haylock, (who is not a performer), who adopted the persona of the impresario introducing his star turns in a vaudeville show. Diversity is celebrated each night with performers from multiple backgrounds, riffing on aspects of popular culture with subversive material regarding gender, race, sexuality, and global politics, framed by the beautiful interior of The Famous Spiegeltent. The re-framing of the conventional vaudevillian formula, using
an adults-only edge, proved highly successful for the touring life of *La Clique* within ‘The Famous’ and later beyond. It appeared at Brighton Festival, 2005, Melbourne International Arts Festival in October-November 2005, followed by Adelaide Fringe in March 2006. *La Clique* went on to become an international hit, touring with the tent until 2008, when it also began to appear at prestigious large-scale venues, in London, New York and Montreal, (amongst others); albeit replicating the staging at ‘The Famous’, with its intimate circular stage. It won an Olivier Award after a nine-month stint at The Hippodrome in London, in 2009, receiving standing ovations every night, and cementing its success in the broader theatrical community and globalized festival culture. It then toured continuously until 2010 when Bates and Haylock parted ways. A name change saw *La Clique* become *La Soiree*; the new show, (same format and many of the same acts), which won another Olivier Award in 2015, continues to play to sell out crowds wherever it goes.

When I commenced this dissertation I thought that researching the genres of the world class, hilarious and uniquely spectacular acts in *La Clique*, (the performance) would help me answer the hunch that indicated my experience as a spectator at the beautiful mirror-tent, known as ‘The Famous’ involved transgression.

However, after conducting interviews, and analyzing the data, I realized that the experience I had *at the door*, when I arrived at The Famous Spiegeltent in 2006, is what led me to investigate the staging of performance at the tent. The house-staff (non-performers) that greeted me  

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3 Australia’s largest arts festival event, Adelaide Fringe was established in 1960 by artists in response to their exclusion from the programme of the Adelaide Festival of Arts. At this time the festival also limited the opportunities of smaller or local scale companies to showcase work (Peterson, 2010). Adelaide Fringe, (like Edinburgh Fringe), has since surpassed Adelaide Arts Festival. Although both organisations are now inextricably linked and share audiences and major corporate and commercial status, it is still a breeding ground for edgy, independent new work (Edinburgh Fringe Society, 2010).
adopted a kind of informal role-play to interact when I entered the space. Their personas were reminiscent of vaudevillian showman or circus impresarios, assumed by men and women and by Haylock as Emcee. They were not in character, but they were evoking the use of role, subverting the stereotype of a showman in an irreverent way to welcome ‘guests’ to the world of the spiegeltent. I was greeted this way every time I visited the tent, not just when I saw *La Clique*, (which I watched several times over the three week duration of the festival). It was this use of a specific style/s of performance, as a tool to communicate with people offstage that appeared to complement the aesthetic of the space, which caught my attention. It struck me that the ‘non-performers’ were performing; improvising with spectators using the genres of circus, cabaret, vaudeville and burlesque, influenced by the acts in La Clique. It was in this in-between space, offstage at the door, and at the bar, before the acts on stage commenced, that I locate my research- an exploration of the staging of performance at The Famous Spiegeltent.

Performance is an essentially contested concept and two interpretations are necessary to highlight the key areas of scholarship used for this research; one approach to performance research analyses the display of skill/s of a performer in a specific performance and the second approach examines the display of performance as “culturally coded behavior” and the contexts that surround it.

This research applies the second interpretation using sociological models to analyse performance as a form of display less focused on skills than on patterned codes of behavior (Carlson, 1996, p. 4). Theatrical distance or role distance, as argued by Carroll (1999), relies on ironic distancing by the performer that is simultaneously shared with the spectators. The distancing enables the performer to playfully signal to the audience that the performance is both real and unreal. This distancing is a subversive device that displays the conscious choice by the performer to step outside the frame of the performance and reflexively comment on the performance, signing to the audience to share and even comment back to the performer. I extend the concept of theatrical distance to include the ‘performance that ‘starts at the door’, when crew and house-staff at the tent
employ role-distance to communicate. I propose that this use of performance has a reciprocal impact. Exploring this spectator/performer dynamic at the tent I apply Schechner’s (2003) concept of the ‘whole’ performance, suggesting that it may be a ‘renewed’ site for spectators to blur boundaries between performing and spectating through play (Lefebvre et al., 1996, p. 14). I refer to the adoption of role in this space ‘in-between’ performing and spectating as ‘spiegeltent performance’.

The literature of reception theory analyses the theatrical event, its staging and how the spectator is affected by the performance or performer. It does not look at the reverse; how the response by a spectator transforms the performer. Some aspects of audience and reception theory contributed to the development of the theoretical aspect of the research, such as the interpretation of the theatrical event and its socio-cultural context, (Sauter, 1988, 2004; Bennett, 1997), Sauter’s (1988) concept of theatre as the ‘playing of culture’, and Van Maanen’s (2004) theory of theatrical events and the importance of frame to their contexts, (detailed in chapter four).

Consumer Culture Theory investigates two-way relationships in service environments, drawing on the concept of performance. Using the lens of CCT I re-examined the staging of popular entertainment genres at The Famous Spiegeltent in the offstage space. I was then able to theorise the spectator-performer relations using inter-disciplinary research to offer a new perspective, which interrogated how the offstage performers encouraged the spectators to interact. The hallmarks of the informal and improvisatory idea of spiegeltent performance’ are an iteration of the staging of the offstage performance that occurred in the first burlesque theatres and cabarets in the 19th century in Europe, and later at the turn of the 20th century in vaudeville theaters in the U.S.A, and Australia.

The aim of the investigation of ‘spiegeltent performance’ is to construct a new theory of performer/spectator interaction that I call the partial performer / partial spectator transgression that investigates the staging of performance at The Famous Spiegeltent from a spatial and social perspective. It considers the following statements/ questions:

1. The staging of acts focuses on performers/performance. Why?
2. The staging of the spectator experience is not well understood. Why?

3. The staging of acts for spectators always focuses on reception. Why?

I commenced the research using performance theory and genre analysis to examine the first three questions. Theatrical frame theory was applied to understand the communicative frame of ‘spiegeltent performance’. To understand the staging of the spectator experience I needed to move out of performance studies to Consumer Culture Theory. Consumer Culture Theory revealed the existence of the partial producer/partial consumer and I applied this theory to the play of performance between performers and spectators at the tent. The sub-questions explore why the research moved out of performance theory and how it contributes new knowledge back to the field of performance studies.

4. To understand the staging of spectator experience I resorted to Consumer Culture Theory. Why?

5. Consumer Culture Theory reveals the existence of the partial performer/partial spectator. Why and How?

6. The partial is transgressive. How?

7. What does this add to performance theory? How?

The dissertation applies the following key areas of scholarship to answer the questions; Genre theory, from the field of popular entertainments in performance studies, provides an overview of the staging of new circus, cabaret, burlesque and vaudeville performance in La Clique. The research proposes these genres draw on carnivalesque spectacle to intentionally shock spectators. It also applies Kershaw’s view of spectacle as a site for transformation, to interpret the staging of genre at the tent, and its affect on spectator-performer relations and the theoretical framework. Frame theory is employed to decipher the relationship between the tent, genre and role in the spectator/performer dynamic. Influenced by Irving Goffman’s (1975) ‘frame analysis’, the use of role to disrupt audience expectations is retrieved from sociology and returned to performance. ‘Frame’ is included in the title of the thesis to foreshadow the investigation of the surrounding contexts of the spectator/performers interactions including the space of the Fringe.
festival and how and why they involve transgression. Performance anthropology is employed via the concepts of ritual in performance, liminoid experience and *communitas* or shared experience to theorise the effect of the partial performer/partial spectator transgression and its reciprocal nature. Consumer Culture Theory is applied to interpret the staging of spectator in immersive environments, providing a new perspective on the performer/spectator relationship and to develop the theory of the partial/spectator/partial performer transgression to return to performance studies. Foucault’s philosophical spatial theory of heterotopia is applied to further theorise transgression, performance and space as an experience toward otherness.

**Chapter Summary**

Chapter Two reviews the literature related to the primary analytical concepts of performance, and performativity within the field of performance studies, and ‘spiegelent performance’ is contextualised within a discussion of the historical origins of four genres, (circus, vaudeville, cabaret and burlesque) that fall under the umbrella of popular entertainments. Featured in *La Clique*, these genres and are examined in relationship to the staging of spectator and transgression, and otherness. The literary concepts of carnival, carnivalesque, inter-textuality, and dialogism are used as a lens through which to analyse the Fringe festival as theatricalized event that frames transformational experience.

Chapter Three examines the origin of the genres of vaudeville and burlesque performance, focusing on historical links to transgression and the staging of spectator experience from a socio-spatial perspective. Chapter Four explores the genres of cabaret and circus, discussing contemporary iterations of these forms, and their influence on the spectator/performer dynamics. Chapter Four also applies Goffman’s (1975) the ‘theatrical frame’ to examine the disruption of role positions between performing, spectating. It also draws on theatrical frame theory to identify the communicative frame that occurs as a result of the destabilization of role via the use of role distance.
Chapter Five explains the rationale for my unusual and innovative approach to practice-based research, in which the practice is used to construct the method is not the practice form being studied, as is the conventional approach in performance studies. It introduces an interdisciplinary component to the method in the form of research documentary titled, *A Tent and A Show* (see Appendix). The construction of this creative work was the method used to mobilize the data from twelve interviews conducted with crew and creatives from The Famous Spiegeltent, applying the methodologies of performance ethnography and the practice of performative documentary making. I acknowledge that this alternative approach to practice-based research expands the understanding of how this method is currently employed by most drama, theatre, performance, dance or performance scholars.

In Chapter Six, transgression at the tent is theorised as a ‘partial experience’ of otherness activated by the blurring of role. Drawing on Consumer Culture Theory and Performance anthropology, it proposes a new perspective about the staging of the spectator by foregrounding the transformation of the performer, an under studied area in the literature. The theory of the partial performers/partial spectator is fully realized and the effect applies the concept of *communitas* to interpret participant experience. Finally, Chapter Six employs Foucault’s notion of the heterotopia of the mirror to theorise the staging of otherness and transgression for spectators and performers at the tent as an exemplar of ‘other’ space. My aim was to conjure the material and metaphorical presence of the mirrors, and to infuse them with the uncanny, the familiar, and strange, by repeating and iterating their presence throughout the thesis and in the documentary. This is demonstrates how the data analysis through practice was mobilized toward theory, and reveals the dialogic nature of my research documentary and thesis. Chapter Seven offers a summary of my research findings and concludes my thesis. I restate the research questions and demonstrate how I have answered them by re-visiting the trajectory of my research, from fieldwork, to analysis and the development of my theoretical stance.
Method

My methodology is interdisciplinary, combining performance theory, consumer culture theory, and visual and performance ethnography to examine the spectator/performer’s experience of transgression. It uses multiple methods to explore my experience as a spectator from the polyvocal stance of researcher-practitioner (Merlin, 2004). My lived experience as both spectator and theatre practitioner led me towards visual and performance ethnography as tools for research. These methodologies offer a vocabulary for “exploring the expressive elements of culture, a focus on embodiment as a crucial component of cultural analysis and a tool for representing scholarly engagement…” (Hamera, 2013, p. 207). Taking artifacts of performance, such as La Clique and ‘The Famous’ and using the concepts of performance to apply critical meaning demonstrates the mutually reinforcing style of my research process. It allows for the integration of specialized or expert knowledge, embodied knowledge, and critical distance with pragmatic know-how. Engaging critically is the key aspect of rhetorical reflexivity, whereby Hamera explains, that to engage critically is to continually interrogate ones methods and motives, and to question scholarly representation. For who is the subjunctive ‘I’ that I continually refer to? (Hamera, 2013). The tacit, sensorial, and experimental nature of performance ethnography is staged in my research as a performative research documentary. I chose this approach drawing from new documentary practices that use concepts of performance such as aesthetics and reflexivity. The ‘making’ process or as D. Soyini Madison would refer to it, “the doing or performance of critical theory” is my strategy for inquiry (Madison & Hamera, 2005, p. 15). The process of shooting, and editing served two aims: to generate data from the interviews in a form through which to analyse the data. The unpredictability of live performance as discussed by Phelan (1993), Auslander, (2008) and Carlson (1996), also highlights its instability as a concept to interpret, one of the reasons I wanted to use documentary to mobilize the interview data. The aim of the research documentary, titled A Tent and A Show (Appendix), was to find a concrete way to generate data about data that did not exist in a written form; it existed as play between performers and spectators before and after the ticketed performance of La Clique. The performance I was
analyzing was not an ‘actual’ performance, and not suited to the application of performance analysis. I was documenting the ‘playing of culture’ embodied by the crew at the tent, who became conduits for the whole performance experience. I analysed their cultural narrative, conducting twelve semi-structured in-depth interviews and then cut responses into a form through which to analyse it. I edited the raw data through a series of four cuts. I selected images, soundscape, writing, excerpts from interviews and archival footage that demonstrated an interrogation of the relationship between ‘The Famous’ and the spectator; the spectator and the performance of La Clique; and dynamic between the tent and the Fringe festival. My practice-based approach examines how space, time and performance frame the staging of spectator experience, using an in-depth case study of the staging of performance at The Famous. I creatively documented my experience as a spectator using a form of performative research- a new approach to practice-based research that uses one form of practice to investigate another form of practice. I.e. It uses the practice of documentary making to analyse the practice of performance I conducted interviews with artists and producers associated with Fringe festival production and event management at ‘The Famous’, and then constructed a research documentary to analyse the interview data. Each iterations of the research documentary, and the critical writing in the thesis demonstrates a ‘congruence’ between theory and method rather than division (Hamera, 2013, p. 208).

It is usual in performance studies to apply performance analysis to analyse specific acts in a specific performance (such as in La Clique). My approach proposes an unusual sort of practice-based research, which offers an alternative definition to the one preferred by scholars in Drama, theater, dance and performance studies. The practice of performative documentary making is employed as a method to generate data (a research documentary), and insights into data (develop a theory). I have not employed performance to examine ‘spiegeltent performance’ because I was not analyzing the acts; I was investigating how performance was used as role-based communication and how this transformed experience beyond the act on stage. Therefore I
wanted to use a method that enabled me to review my experience as a spectator; to interrogate my own experience ‘at the door’ by interviewing the people who helped construct it— the Manager, owner and other front of house staff. I have used the data gathered and re-constructed it into a documentary as a means to identify, analyse and theorise ‘spiegeltent performance’. I acknowledge that this approach is a departure from usual approaches to practice-based research. In this sense I am arguing for an expansion of the definition of what constitutes practice-based research. If, as argued in literature by Bolt and Barrett (2007), Kershaw and Nicolson (2011), Haseman, (2012) the embodied and ephemeral nature of the practice studied requires it be conveyed via a demonstration of that specific practice (i.e. Spiegeltent performance is used to analyse Spiegeltent performance), then this method falls outside that definition. I am not using documentary to research documentary. However, I argue that the method I have employed using the practice of documentary making to examine the practice of performance is a valid method. It was this process that constructed and revealed a new form of data and ultimately the process of editing a series of cuts, (detailed in the process diary in chapter five) revealed the basis of the theory of the partial performer/partial spectator.

The development of my theoretical stance evolved from Denzin’s epistemology of the researcher as-bricoleur (2011). Bricolage is the creation of something from a diverse range of materials, and in research it pertains to the use of multiple methods, therefore this type of researcher is someone who uses the “aesthetic tools of his or her craft, deploying whatever strategies or methods, or empirical materials are at hand” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 6). For this reason Denzin argues that the central image of
qualitative research is the crystal (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000b, p. 5). Although a triangle has three sides, Denzin defines ‘triangulation’ as a process of crystallization. Interpreting Richardson, Denzin explains that like a crystal this approach to research is multi-faceted, continually changing and evolving and altering (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Much like the documentary filmmaker, the qualitative researcher has various choices and techniques at her fingertips to utilize during the research process and the result is “a complex, reflexive montage, a fluid set of interconnected images and representations …that connect the whole” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 9). Therefore I chose to use practice-based methods to interpret the interview material applying Denzin’s rational which asserts that; “The gendered, narrative bricoleur also knows that researchers all tell stories about the worlds they have studied ” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 9).

**Key Words**

My interest in transgression is associated with a curiosity concerned with notions of the other, and the blurry line that renders difference. Raymond Williams used the idea of “keywords” to interrogate changing social, political and historical values. Williams referred to keywords such as “culture” and “industry” as “historical semantics”, illustrating how their shifting meanings can be understood in broad and localized contexts (Williams, 1985). By re-visiting keywords, such as transgression, throughout my thesis I demonstrate my understanding of the mutability of this terms and how meaning evolved throughout the trajectory of my research. My analytic vocabulary uses the following key theoretical/conceptual ideas including; transgression, performativity, performance, Fringe and carnival, otherness, cultural performance, frame,
and liminoid experience. These key words amongst others are used to enhance my ‘theoretical sensitivity’ (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), ‘conceptual density’, and the ‘explanatory power’ of my experience (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, pp. 158, 267). An explanation of these concepts follows, and these key words are continually contextualised throughout the thesis.

The concept of transgression has a rich history and theorists have interrogated its meaning in relation to sexuality, power, deviance, and social order across the disciplines of philosophy, cultural, critical and literary theory, feminist studies, and performance studies amongst others. It is an unstable concept associated with ‘slippery’ boundaries and blurriness, and there is a significant body of literature pertaining to these aspects of transgression as evidenced in the work of Michel Foucault, Peter Stallybrass and Allon White (Stallybrass & White, 1986, 1999) and Stuart Hall (Hall, 1993, 1997; Stallybrass & White, 1999). The origin of transgress, comes from Latin, meaning ‘stepped-across’. It is an unstable concept associated with ‘slippery’ boundaries. Key author on the topic Michel Foucault examines transgression in his 1963 text *A Preface to Transgression*. Foucault’s contribution examines transgression and sexuality in a secular, post-enlightenment age, arguing that transgression and ‘the limit’ has replaced notions of the sacred and profane.

Foucault’s notion of ‘the limit’ – a marked line that transgressive acts cross time and again – represents a significant concern the study of performance (1977, p. 34). Like limits in language and in the law, there are boundaries of the self that exist highlighted by acts of transgression. For Foucault, the individual is defined through a process of construction and deconstruction and part of this involves the separation of self from other, identified by the crossing and recrossing of boundaries that enables limits to be identified (1963). This ‘play of transgression’ performs a service of examining the limit it crosses, “…its role is to measure the excessive
distance that it opens at the heart of the limit…” (Foucault, 1977, p. 35).

When encountering difference in the form of other, once the limit is identified, individuals negotiate how to constitute themselves against this limit. In a contemporary context transgress means to go beyond the limits of what is morally, socially, or legally acceptable, and transgression is used to describe the practice of disrupting boundaries in art, literature and performance using unconventional behaviour or methods. Foucault (1963) influential theorization of transgression also analyses the literature of dissident surrealist writer Georges Bataille to question the construction of knowledge and power. My research does not focus on transgression in relation to moral boundaries or sexuality and excess, as articulated by Bataille, however, it does draw from Foucault’s central concern regarding transgression and limitation, individually and culturally.

Specifically I draw on Foucault’s notion of the limit as an experience of difference, highlighted by the identification and crossing of boundaries. For Foucault the boundaries of self are illuminated by acts of transgression, and therefore the location of limits is intrinsic to these acts. For Foucault, the individual is defined through a process of construction and deconstruction and part of this involves the separation of self from other, identified by the crossing and recrossing of boundaries that enables limits to be identified. It is this aspect of Foucault’s complex theory of transgression that is most relevant to my research. For this dissertation I define transgression as an act of boundary crossing or constraint-defying (Jenks, 2003). I am exploring the staging of performance and space, its relationship to transgression by examining medieval carnival and the contemporary Fringe festival; transgression in popular entertainments; in ritual approaches
to performance and to notions of otherness. Transgression also plays a role
in the methodological approach I have employed, as it disrupts conventional
definitions of practice-based research applied scholars of performance. The
purpose of this is the highlight the evolution of transgression as social and
spatial concept that contributes to the complex role based interactions
embodied by performance and spectators.

To understand transgression in the context of this research it is also
important to discuss the concept of the ‘other’. Influenced by Stallybrass
and White (1986), my analysis of transgression and otherness includes a
discussion about the ‘other’ cultural identity performed by the ‘carnies’ that
travel with the tent, how and why it is linked to transgression and carnival.
As Stallybrass and White argue, “…what is socially peripheral may be
symbolically central” (Stallybrass & White, 1986, p. 5) to my understanding
of the social, spatial and cultural interactions at the tent between performers
and spectators. Therefore my research contextualises transgression in
relation to the performative, spatial and social ‘other’ at ‘The Famous’.

The Germanic origin of the Old English ‘other’ is related to *ander*,
from the Indo-European root meaning of ‘different’. ‘Other’ refers to a
person or thing that is different from the known and in this context how
participants encounter the other through performative interaction. There is a
vast philosophical history associated with the concept of otherness that dates
back to Plato’s Sophist. Van Pelt describes encounters with otherness as a
process whereby, “the stranger engages in a dialogue of the ontological
problems of being and non-being, of one and the other” (Van Pelt, 2000).
Major thinkers of the 20th century interrogate otherness-to analyse self,
identity, ego and subjectivity from multiple perspectives. Jacques Lacan
used psychoanalysis to examine the ‘gap between the subject and the ego, whilst Heidegger, Hegel and Sartre wrote about alterity using a hermeneutic phenomenology to analyse being and non-being. Meanwhile, Simon-de Beauvoir and Julia Kristeva theorised ontology and alterity from a feminist perspective examining gender and identity. This vast literature underpins some of the analysis of spectatorship in theatre and performance in performance studies predominantly drawing on semiotics and phenomenology. Contemporary theories concerning the psychoanalytic notion of ‘other’ as a person are not within the reach of my research; rather how participants come to interact with notions of other is my focus. In

Judith Butler’s theoretical stance regarding the construction of sexual identity establishes that otherness is a relative concept shaped by the social world from which an individual comes. She argues that self is constituted by other, highlighting for example gay and lesbian identity positions that create themselves through the construction and negation of a heterosexual other (Butler, 2011). I discuss how the performative identities constructed by the circus-folk within the festival space path the way for spectators to experience otherness.

In Chapter Three and Four I contextualise transgression and otherness in relation to the popular entertainments performed at the tent and how they affect the social dynamics. I also examine otherness as an extension of Foucault’s transgression and its limits. Specifically I interpret the meaning of the interplay between the identification of limits in performing and spectating and how those limits/boundaries blur toward otherness. The consumption of otherness is examined in relationship to CCT and the postmodern consumer’s desire to ‘purchase’ extraordinary experience (Cova, Kozinets, & Shankar, 2012). In my research documentary and in Chapter Six, I discuss the spectator/performer interactions as an example of
the blurring of roles between performing or producing a service, and consuming or spectating a cultural performance.

Drawing on Foucault’s lecture Of Other Spaces delivered to the Cercle d’études architecturales (Circle of Architectural Studies) in 1967, I apply a heterotopic dimension to the analysis of ‘The Famous’ locating it as a space that exemplifies the spatial other. The text from the lecture was not published into the public domain until shortly before his death twenty years later in the French Journal, Architecture, Mouvement, Continuite in October, 1984 as, ‘Des espaces autres. Une conference inedite de Michel Foucault’, (Foucault, 1984). I am using the translation featured in Dehaene and De Cauter’s ‘Heterotopia and The City: Public space in a post civil society’ (Dehaene & De Cauter, 2008, pp. 15-29), which examines the concept of heterotopia using spatial theory in architecture and urban design.

Heterotopia is a slippery concept and there are multiple ways that a space can be read for its heterotopic dimension in relation to spatial configuration, the social spatial interaction or a confluence of the social, spatial and performative (Heynen, 2008, pp. 313-315). Other places include museums, holiday resorts, gated communities, theatres, libraries, gardens, and cemeteries to site a few examples. They are real and unreal spaces that embody utopian notions of idealized space juxtaposed with their actual physical reality. They exist in a specific time-space configuration that separates and highlights conventional or everyday space. Heterotopias also operate via a system of conventions or gestures, an opening and closing that simultaneously includes and excludes participants. Foucault’s other spaces are “multiple, contested and fragment in meaning…one can only enter with a certain permission and after having performed a certain number of gestures…” (Foucault, 2008, p. 21). Ultimately the purpose of reading space
as heterotopian is to interrogate the relationship between space and culture. I read the tent from the social –spatial and performative dimension drawing on the notion of ‘third-space’ of the ‘cultural sphere’ as articulated by De Cauter and Dehaene (2008, p. 91). Dehaene and De Cauter assert that heterotopias essential to the human condition for they are spaces that engage humans in play, are spaces whereby private and public space collide with imagination and this engagement with playful space has the potential to create community (Dehaene & De Cauter, 2008, p. 95).

The concept of carnival in cultural studies has come to provide a new metaphor for reading the social, and Stallybrass and White centralize the importance of transgression to carnival arguing for its value it as an example of a metaphor of transformation, a real social force whose symbolic meanings are associated with notions of resistance and temporary subversion of societal structures (Stallybrass and White 1986). Drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin’s notion of carnival, their influential theory, interpreted in the academic lexicon as ‘carnivalesque’, argues for transgression as a mode through which social groups release and renew through subversive celebrations. These celebrations ultimately serve to restore the status quo. Literary theorist Bakhtin’s carnival denotes it as public practice whereby festive celebration of the ‘lower bodily principle’, the humanness of existence, transforms into artistic practice, a counter-hegemonic tradition that emerged from the carnival ethos of collective cleansing rituals. Held at cyclical times throughout the year, (such as harvest) and open to all strata’s of society, carnival is an example of a Stallybrass and White’s concept of ‘metaphors of transformation’. As a place of ‘licensed transgression’, Bakhtin considers carnival as a transitory time when people detach
themselves from the usual activities of daily through ‘free thinking’ and ‘radical self expression’. ‘Free thinking’ is the detachment from normative behaviours and is facilitated by the spectacle of the carnival. The concept of ‘radical self-expression’ is the disruption of social structures that symbolically promote the potential for social change. Through the temporary inversion of social order, which symbolizes resistance and disorder, carnival is enacted through transgressions of the body and social hierarchy (1986). The reveler is transported to another place during carnival, symbolized through ritualised performative gestures including the adoption of elaborate costume, and masquerade to transform identity. I apply the notion of carnival to interpret The Famous Spiegeltent as a 21st century site for the temporary transgression or transformation of self through performative interactions with ‘others’.

The performative and spatial landscape of the Fringe festival is explored to interpret the frame of the experience of the spectator and performer. ‘Fringe’, “… refuses the myth of unitary origins, instead conveying that there is dispersal at beginnings” (2006, p. 364) following this there are two meanings associated with Fringe used in this dissertation that require explanation—fringe performance and fringe space. When used to describe performance, ‘Fringe’ is a fluid phrase that is associated with a particular kind of radical, raw, alternative, theatre performance that challenges conventional approaches to theatre making in terms of genre, staging and audience-actor interactions (Frew & Ali-Knight, 2010). Terms used to describe it include; political, feminist, underground, experimental, contemporary performance, or avant-garde. The nature of fringe performance is “ever shifting and necessarily ideological, deriving its
vocabulary from several stand-points: primarily the geographical, the political and the aesthetic[s]” (Freeman, 2006, p. 364). Shrum suggests that ‘fringe’ also conjures images of “…creativity, scruffiness, oddity, scandal, frivolity, youthfulness, frothiness, and frippery” (1996, p. 65). Sara Freeman asserts “Fringe successfully delivers the image of theatre on the edge or border: but it continued to imply that those on the ‘outside are waiting to get in’”, implying that it is also perceived as pathway to the mainstream (Freeman, 2006, p. 367). Fringe space can also be related to the actual place on the edge of a more established and cultural – highbrow event. Willems-Braun (1994) argues for the importance of examining how the spatial configuration of a Fringe festival contributes to the experience of transformation for the spectator. The Fringe festival is a place where social identities are contested due to the inter-subjective nature of the social dynamics and Willems-Braun refers to these environments as “discursive arenas” (pg. 81). He argues that due to the interaction between multiple subjectivities ambivalence, rather than notions of transgression or liminality marks the Fringe festival, or ‘festival space’. My research interrogates the ambivalence of the performative, social, and spatial boundaries that define ‘ambivalent’ and ‘discursive’ arena of festival space, activated by the re-configuration of the spaces within a city area during a Fringe festival. I apply Willems-Braun concept of Fringe to interpret the arena of the space constructed at ‘The Famous’ including Goffman’s (1975) theory of frame. I apply to the literary concepts of carnival time and the symbolic inversion of order, and the cultural theory of carnivalesque to interpret the transformation of spectators and performers within the Fringe at ‘The Famous’. Throughout my thesis I interpret the idea of ‘dispersal’ as the
Singer’s term ‘cultural performance’, first used in 1959, now widely found in anthropological approaches to performance studies and ethnographic research is a concept applied to the Fringe festival to interpret the frame and contexts that influence spectator/performer interactions. Cultural performance exhibits the following characteristics, “a definitely limited timespan, a beginning and an end, an organised programme of activity, a set of performers, an audience, and a place and occasion of performance” (Singer, 1959, p. 174). Bauman suggests that cultural performance offers insight into the construction of culture and social dynamics for they are highly reflexive events (Bauman, 2011). Cultural performance changes the spatial dynamic between performers and spectators, disrupting the spatial relationship between the event and participant. The cultural performance offers participants the chance to interact according to the ecology of the space in which it occurs, spatially, socially, and performatively. They reflexively re-present and re-construct culture through performance as a way for spectators to experience their own culture or that of others. They are a pathway for how participants see themselves – both how they are and how they might be (Bauman, 2011, p. 715).

By analyzing the transformation of the spectator from passive observer to ‘cultural actor’ I argue that the performer/spectator interaction involves the blurring of roles, which involves a ‘partial experience’ of the role of the other. The concept of ‘partial experience’ drawn from CCT argues that the postmodern consumer seeks an experience of community
and connection in specific environments. The meaning of partial comes from the Latin *partialis*, or part, to exist only in part, to be incomplete. Partial also originates from Old French *parciel*, ‘to have a liking for’. The partial consumer in CCT is a consumer who participates in his or her own experience of service, for example using internet banking, is partly operating as a consumer of and partly as a provider of the service. The lines between service and delivery are blurred. The consumer is participating in the act of creating and delivering their own experience of a visit to the bank (Manolis et al., 2001). I have borrowed the theoretical notion of ‘the partial consumer’ and extended it to apply to my analysis of the interaction between spectators and performers at ‘The Famous’. Specifically I extend the notion of ‘partial experience’ to include the performer. I question how the experience of the performer is impacted when the spectator transitions from passive observer to cultural actor. This ‘partial’ performance conforms to the conventions of participation expected of a spectator watching popular entertainments. I extend ‘partial experience’ at ‘The Famous’ to include the performers. My research argues that the performers transform into partial spectators. They view the partial performance of the spectators. The space between performing and spectating is therefore disrupted. The value of this research lies between performance and consumerism. Examining the space between buying a service and experiencing a cultural performance highlights the value of performance in an-other dimension. This other dimension sits in the realm of the liminoid, and uses performance as the vehicle through which festival participants communicate and connect. This form of connection is a significant example of the way postmodern consumers are seeking an experience of community in secular society.
The blurring of role between performing and spectating, defined here as the ‘partial experience’ of the role of an-other encompasses the crossing of spatial and performative thresholds. Analyzing these multiple thresholds revealed the need for my research to analyse the nature of the boundaries or limits crossed when ‘partial experience’ occurs. The evolution of the concept of liminality into performance and reception theory invited an investigation of the overlapping concerns of sociological and theatrical aspects of performance- how does context inform the theatrical event? In the 1970s Schechner’s avant-garde company The Performance Group conducted multiple experimental performances that emphasized and disrupted the boundaries between audience and performers spatially and socially, leading to the theoretical analysis of such disruption. He referred to these aspects of performance as ‘liminal’, posing questions about “…how the audience gets to and into, the performance place, and how they go from that place; in what ways this gathering/dispersing is related to the preparations/cooling off aspects of performer’s work” (Schechner, 1977, pg. 122). The concept of ‘threshold crossing’, (from the Latin limen for threshold), was applied by anthropologist Victor Turner to interpret ritual processes as theatrical events in traditional cultures., studying ritual symbols and processes engaged in by Ndembu tribes in Zambia in 1958 (Turner, 1982, p. 21). His extensive body of work in competitive symbology and processual analysis is linked to analysis of ritual performances by sociologist, anthropologists and performance theorists including Abrahams (Abrahams, 2001), Conquergood (1989), MacAlloon (1984), and Schechner (1985; Turner & Schechner, 1988). Audience and reception theorists applied liminality to interrogate the audience’s perception of theatrical
events. Bennett’s research identifies liminalities as “ideologically encoded” (Bennett, 1997, pg. 11) experiences, considering how an audience’s expectations of a whole event are shaped by the multiple contexts in which they exist. This includes the institution in which they are housed, the space, the country, the socio-political climate and so forth. Liminal refers to the notion of a “transition between” the everyday and the ritualised space that facilitates a shift from on state to another, such as the shift between childhood and adolescence, (Turner, 1982, p. 41), and was applied by Arnold van Gennep to research about rites de passage in traditional cultures. Van Gennep’s research distinguishes phases of ritual performance as passages of time whereby the behaviour of participants shifts from one basic human state to another, over three stages. The stages include; dislocation from daily life; a “betwixt-and-between condition involving seclusion from the everyday scene”, and re-connection to the daily world (MacAloon, 1984, p. 21). The second of these stages is what Turner refers to as liminal and the dislocation from everyday existence is also one of the dimensions of Foucault’s heterotopia. Turner (1982) explains that in traditional cultures:

The whole community goes through the entire ritual round, whether in terms of total or representative participation. Thus some rites, such as those of sowing …may involve everyone…others may be focused on specific groups, categories…such as men, women…Yet the whole ritual adds up to the total participation of the whole community. (p. 31)

The in-between nature of the liminal realm, (involving a period of seclusion), is both unsettling and ambiguous; it is a serious place of challenge, existential crisis, or becoming; paradoxically it is also a space
that favours the *ludic* from Latin *ludere*, ‘to play’. What distinguishes the liminal from the liminoid? Turner’s etymology of liminoid defines the Greek origin of *-oid* as ‘like, resembling’. Turner argues that being removed from a traditional context, has “individualized” rites of passage rituals. Separated from the sacred, “… the solitary artist creates the liminoid phenomena” (Turner, 1974, pp. 54-55). For Turner and Schechner ‘liminoid’ is closely linked to play, leisure, freedom, and symbolic genres such a literature, performance and art, hallmarks of what they refer to as “liminal” phenomena (Turner & Schechner, 1988, p. 40). The concept of liminoid experience is applied to interpret liminal symbols such as the theatrically framed play at ‘The Famous’.

The notion of *communitas* as a mode through which people temporarily abandon social status to facilitate a shared experience of culture through performative participation is used in this research to theorise the outcome of the ‘the partial experience’ of spectator and performers. To clarify Turner’s use of the term I shall briefly introduce three distinct aspects of *communitas* he identified. The first is ‘spontaneous’ *communitas*; “a direct, immediate and total confrontation of human identities” whereby the connection between people, time, event and space sets up a ‘magical’ experience, such as the experience of seeing a favourite band at a music festival (Turner & Schechner, 1988, p. 47); ‘ideological’ *communitas*, is a set of theoretical concepts that describes spontaneous *communitas* in relationship to a participants memory of the event, and ‘normative’ *communitas* examines how subcultures evolve to perpetuate and maintain the relationships that evolve out of the experience of spontaneous *communitas* (Turner & Schechner, 1988, pp. 48-50). I deconstruct the
performative interactions at the tent influenced by the notion of ‘Spontaneous’ *communitas* and the ‘magical’ connection made over time between performers and spectators; ‘ideological’ *communitas* relates to the cultural memory constructed and co-created by the cast, crew and spectators and represented as an example of cultural narrative in Chapter Five and Chapter Six; and ‘normative’ *communitas* is applied to the development of my theory of transgression via the blurring of role, a method through which community is formed and perpetuated.

**Summary**

This thesis contextualises, analyses and interrogates transgression and the staging of ‘spiegeltent performance’ from the following dimensions:

- A contextualisation of the genres of vaudeville, burlesque, cabaret and circus and the staging of transgression;

- A consideration of the spatial contexts of cultural performance that frame the staging of performance at ‘The Famous’ i.e carnival and Fringe festival culture and performance

- An analysis of the performative identity of the other, embodied by the circus-folk who travel with the tent;

- An analysis of the theoretical dimensions of ritual in performance applied to cultural performance, and spectator/performer interactions;

- A theorised analysis of the performer/spectator dynamics drawn from performance theory and consumer culture theory;
• A performative research documentary exploring the culture of the staging of performance at ‘The Famous’ and the influence of La Clique on spectator experience

• Analysis of the theorised concept of the partial spectator/partial performer, partial performer/partial spectator;

• A proposed theory of transgression embodied by role shifting that blurs into the partial experience of the other.

A theorised investigation into the significance of the staging of performance and heterotopia.

I thought that this ‘new knowledge’ would come from my close observation and richly detailed study of the acts in cabaret/circus La Clique. Each act transgresses the body in some way: by swallowing a sword, displaying ‘superhuman’ feats of strength and skill, contorting or burlesquing the striptease genre. As a spectator I was encouraged to participate adhering to the usual conventions of audience behaviour in such environments, and the intensity of the experience was heightened by the intimate proximity in which these extreme acts were performed inside the tent. Beyond watching and responding to the spectacle how was I encouraged to participate? The most intriguing aspect of the experience was the performative or in-role communication embodied by the crew off stage who approached me ‘as if’ I was part of the show. They inhabited the role of the partial performer, framing their everyday job as ushers or bar staff as a performance that appeared to be for the benefit of each other as much as it was for the spectators. The spectators, (myself included), responded positively to this theatrically framed mode of service delivery and during
the extended time spent at ‘The Famous’, my role as a passive observer transformed to that of cultural actor. Upon reflection, I was ‘performing’ my own experience of the environment.

This insight required a re-examination of what I thought was my experience of transgression. Just because I was watching acts that transgressed the body did not make my experience transgressive. I needed to carefully examine my experience of role shifting from passive observer to cultural actor and this involved my study of the partial and performance. This trajectory led me to question if the boundaries between spectating and consuming could be regarded as a transgression of role between spectator and performer.

If to represent is to describe or depict a subject a particular way, I needed to re-construct my experience by re-presenting it my research documentary, using Brecht’s vefremsdungeffekt and techniques influenced by performative modes of documentary making. This is how I analysed ‘The Famous’ as space that facilitates an experience of transgression for spectators and performers. The liminoid realm created by the space interacting with the performance of genre creates a ‘space between’ performing and spectating. In this liminoid space the spectator assumes a ‘role’ to become part of the performance. Concurrently the ‘space between’ opens an-other space for the performer to become the spectator. The mirrored interior of the tent reflects this temporary partial transformation, and also occupies a liminoid realm. The mirror reflects the ‘in-between’ state of play and captures the reversal of the status between performers and spectators; the mirrors capture the transgression of role that occurs between participants, and the transgression of the rituals associated with the
conventional separation of artist and audience in conventional theatre. Roles and rituals are blurred and a transgression toward otherness has the potential to occur.
The significant evolution in performance research has broadened the scope of performance analysis to other disciplines including, cultural studies, ethnography, sociology, geographical, and anthropological studies (Carlson, 2003). In this chapter I discuss the evolution of performance theory toward the analysis of non-literary works, then turn toward an exploration of the field of popular entertainments to contextualise the staging of performance at ‘The Famous’ via four genres that fall within this polymorphous field of performance analysis. I explore key concepts of performance and performativity, and links between the Fringe festival and the carnival applying literary concepts to interpret the spectator performer dynamics later in the thesis.

Influenced by semiology and literary criticism, the dominance of written texts as the legitimate form through which to analyse performance was challenged by scholars in 1970s. This was demonstrated by an explosion in analysis of performance genres that expanded the conventional understanding of literary play texts, including “…other kinds of texts, comparative relationships between forms of performance, and on the relationships between performances and the cultures that produced them” (McNamara, 1998, p. 5). Soyini Madison elaborates arguing that the study of performance, “… has evolved into ways of comprehending how humans fundamentally make culture, affect power and reinvent ways of being in the world” (Madison & Hamera, 2005, p. xii). Dwight Conquergood views the analysis of performance as a method “… to braid together disparate and stratified ways of knowing” (Conquergood, 2002, p. 152). Conquergood
explains that the dominance of text as a mode of knowing excludes other ways of knowing rooted in embodied experience, orality, and local contexts. He challenges texto-centrism as limited academic recognition of ways of knowing culture from the domain of the practical, embodied and popular (popular again, alludes to the blurry notion of ‘the people’ or ‘masses’).

Theatre scholar Jill Dolan effectively reduces the persistent contestation between text or non-text based works by suggesting that all theatre and performance studies are studies of “a textual culture that interprets and reimagines and imagines and provokes the social and public sphere…” (Roach et al, 2001, p. 104). The main point as McNamara articulates is that “…all forms of performance are revealing-and largely untapped-cultural documents” (McNamara, 1998, p. 5). For performance scholars recognition of and study concerned with what Foucault refers to as the ‘subjugated knowledge’ of cultural practices that fall ‘outside’ of the literary denies agency and legitimacy (Foucault, 1980 cited in Conquergood, 2002, p. 146). ‘Subjugated knowledge’, are “…the local, regional, vernacular, naïve knowledge’s at the bottom of the hierarchy…” (Conquergood, 2002, p. 146). These exist outside of books and are neglected by dominant culture.

The study of popular entertainments is a burgeoning area for performance research and first attracted scholarly critique in the early 1970s in the United Kingdom and United States. Since then, studies have grown exponentially influenced by the establishment of the discipline of performance studies, institutionalized at New York University and Northwestern University in Michigan in the 1980s. In Australia, two courses in performance studies at New South Wales University in Sydney and Monash University in Melbourne were established in the 1990s. In recent years the
field of popular entertainments has grown considerably. Since 2006 the International Federation for Theatre Research has supported the Popular Entertainments Working Group and in 2010, the *Popular Entertainment Studies* journal has produced eleven editions and fifty new research articles. These articles include thematic studies reaching from the end of the nineteenth century including the portability and cultural translation of popular entertainments into Asian in Japan and China (St. Leon, 2014), the globalization of entertainments (as demonstrated by the rise of the globalized festival), an interrogation of the geographical and cultural boundaries subverted by ‘boundary crossing’ performers and genres (Emeljanow, 2012), the construction of celebrity, the impact of new modes of communication, (Emeljanow, 2013). In the United States, the conference for the American Society of Theatre Research has also supported working groups in the field. Current key topics of enquiry canvassed in *A World of Popular Entertainments* (Arrighi & Emeljanow, 2012) demonstrates the expansion of popular entertainments research across various media and technology, tourism and leisure, identity and nation building, and in their reception and promotion of personal well being (Arrighi and Emeljanow, 2012). Therefore it is clear that scholars in cultural history and theatre and performance have extended the field well beyond the original definition put forth by McNamara (1974)

Typical forms of popular entertainments from various periods include; circus, *commedia dell’arte*, vaudeville, pantomimes, the burlesque show; *Gran Guignol*, popular melodrama and farce; the travelling carnival, the minstrel show, the amusement park, blackface
minstrelsy, the dime museum, and the medicine show (McNamara, 1974, p. 3).

Traditional popular entertainments have a vast history stretching from the seventeenth to early twentieth century, and McNamara who pioneered theoretical research defines them as “…live amusements aimed at a broad, relatively “unsophisticated audience” (McNamara, 1974), who along with Matlaw shaped the first American conference to address popular entertainments in 1977 (Mayer, 2010). Initially research in the field focused on popular entertainments as products or objects to be studied. Over time with the influence of historiographers including Vince, McConachie this shifted to the investigation of popular entertainments as artifacts of culture that revealed intricate historical, political and social processes that reflected cultural norms or transgressions. Broadly the terms refer to live performances born of ‘low’ performance traditions found in the travelling carnival and medieval marketplace: ‘Low’ refers to the conventions used in these genres which favour, physical, highly skilled and visually spectacular acts. One of the reasons popular entertainments remained under-theorised until the late twentieth century is related to the idea that literary play texts described by some performance studies scholars as “bourgeois” or “euro bourgeois theatre” (Roach, Reinelt, Kirschenblkatt-Gimblett, & Carlson, 2001) were deemed ‘legitimate’ or high forms of theatre performance, and non-literary, ephemeral works drawn from oral traditions notable were considered ‘low’ or ‘other’. The written word is not privileged in popular entertainments and as Mayer asserts traditionally, “…words are secondary to movement, sound, pageantry, visual symbols and the full range of technical affects” (Mayer & Richards, 1977, p. 276).
I am investigating three distinct genres that fall under the umbrella of popular entertainments: Vaudeville, burlesque and circus. The fourth genre is cabaret and though it is not categorised as popular entertainment, there are certain distinguishing features that align it with the structure and form of popular entertainments. These genres of performance are used to interpret the staging of spectator/performer dynamics in spiegeltent performance, this analysis of genre contributes to the theorization of space, performer-spectator relations and transgression that is the focus of the thesis.

First I discuss the historical origins of spiegeltents applying Bakhtin’s literary notion of carnival to the adoption of the conventions of popular entertainments. Theoretical differences between popular entertainments, popular theatre and conventional theatre performance are also discussed. The historical and social context from which spiegeltents originate, the travelling carnival, has attracted scholarly attention in recent years, however, there is no theoretical analysis of the spectator/performer dynamic in spiegeltents. Cultural historians and independent scholars are researched the areas of circus and vaudeville, outside the field of Theatre, Drama and Performance studies, highlighted its contested status as a legitimate field of study. The study of carnival is applied in two ways; to refer to the interactions between spectators and performers applying concepts of inter-textuality and dialogism; and to the staging carnivalesque performance and its relationship to transgression. Specific geographical, historiographical and temporal aspects of travelling carnival are not discussed, as they are not within the reach of the focus of the research.

The existing literature about the origins of spiegeltents is predominately found in publications in the form of theatrical reviews,
featured editorial, or websites that advertise antique *spiegeltents* and replicas for hire. The Famous Spiegeltent operates their own website for marketing and publicity purposes and many of the independent artists who perform at the tent promote it via their own extensive online networks, using Facebook and YouTube. Research perspectives include extensive historical surveys of the traditional popular genres such as music hall, circus, pantomime, vaudeville, minstrelsy, and burlesque. Recent research into the genres of ‘new’ circus and ‘new’ burlesque has continued to grow since the early 1990’s as evidenced by the work of circus theorist Peta Tait (1998) and feminist scholar Debra Ferreday (2008, 2010) amongst others. These genres form part of the genealogy of ‘spiegeltent performance’ that I have constructed to interpret the theatrical contexts at ‘The Famous’ and provide further insight to the way in which contemporary incarnations of traditional popular entertainments interact with transgression. This approach is influenced by Sara Freeman’s (2006) interpretation of Michel Foucault’s notion of genealogy. Constructing a genealogy creates a pathway to understand alternative theatrical and cultural history and is a method used by Freeman to understand the multitude of terms applied to the production of non-commercial, unsubsidized approaches to theatre making in Britain. Foucault emphasizes the value of genealogy, arguing that mapping history is a way to locate contested, fragmented, and local meanings to phenomena

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4 Companies such as Joint Stock, 7:84, *Theatre de Complicite* and Cheek by Jowl are the companies referred to. These companies, internationally renowned for their innovative and interdisciplinary approaches to performance and theatre making prefer the term ‘alternative’ to describe their work.
that may otherwise be concealed by dominant narratives. Terms used to describe theatre that sit outside of the main stage include, Fringe, underground, other, alternative, independent, political, radical and popular. The value of attempting to categories performances that sit outside main stage performance is a way in which to investigate cultural and social meanings of performances viewed as ‘other’ or ‘Fringe’. Freeman argues for genealogy as method to uncover meaning for it, “…maps history in a way that branches, presenting a multi-focal understanding of events that can be read in many ways, and be responsive to local meaning and to shifts in emphasis and desire” (Freeman, 2006 p. 364).

I am analyzing The Famous Spiegeltent using this ‘multi-focal’ approach to trace the fragmented identity of its performative history is one of the interpretative lens used to examine the relations between performer and spectator onstage and off. Engagement between spectators and performers is staged using the following devices:

- The separation between spectator and performer is disrupted spatially;
- The performers embody and celebrate difference using the techniques of direct address and audience participation;
- Spectators are encouraged to participate during performances using performative gestures;
- The performance environment of the Fringe oeuvre privilege ideas of other.

These conventions distinguish popular entertainments from conventional literary theatre. I will now further examine popular
entertainments and how the conventions adopted by performers and spectators spatially and socially interact with notions of transgression and otherness in the staging of performance.

**Performance studies and popular entertainments: A broad turn**

McNamara (1998) argues that the traditionally narrow focus in performance theory and analysis emerged from the acknowledgment that theatre history studies until the late 1960s focused on the “great artistic achievements” within the framework of mainstream Western professional theatre. The implicit suggestion being that these literary forms were the only major achievements in theatre and performance at any given time historically. This limited scope omitted folkloric theatre, puppet theatre, avant-garde theatre, court theatre, dance-drama, film, and broadcast of performance, rituals, games and popular entertainment (1998, p. 4). By broadening the field of theatre history and later the discipline of performance studies to include cultural performances that utilize popular entertainments, locates performance as a central influence in the shaping and communicating of culture. As McNamara (1978) clarifies:

Perhaps one of these categories may indeed produce a distinguished artistic achievement, but all are serious and complex expressions of a culture’s most fundamental concerns, and all are worth consideration [putative artistic merit aside]…as intricate channels through which the community celebrates itself, its heroes, its triumphs, and its past history (p.4).

The term popular theatre originates from the French phrase théâtre populaire, or “people’s theatre”. ‘Popular’ when used in the context of theatre and performance is a contested term. Popular can refer to specific
categories of performance that originate in the marketplace and to performances that garner the highest audience attendance. Popular non-literary performances can embody subjugated knowledge’s and appeal to mass culture. Pavis asserts that of the idea of popular theatre is an ambiguous issue because the performances of the great classics (which garner a mass audience) are the works that speak directly to the greatest numbers. “Like Sartre, we could see repertory theatre both as traditional popular theatre and a bourgeois cultural fact” (Pavis, 1998, p. 279). Pavis argues that popular theatre encompasses ‘multiple aspects of theatre’ and binary separation on the basis of aesthetics or form is irrelevant:

The notion of popular theatre, so often invoked today is more a sociological than an aesthetic category. This is how the sociology of culture defines an art that is addressed to and/or proceeds from the popular classes, an ambiguous approach in that it does not specify whether this is theatre made for the people or by the people. In any case how are we to define people; and, as Brecht asked, are the people still popular? (p. 276).

Pavis’ summary aptly emphasises the importance of the contextual influences that shape aesthetic choices made by a Director or Producer, where popular performances are staged and how this affects audience attendance. These choices are also influenced by historical, social, and performative genealogies associated with space, performance, and preference. Pavis’ provocative question, “…how are we to define people?” further articulates the importance of including those watching, the spectators, in analysis as well as the form of performance in question. What is it then that distinguishes popular theatre from conventional theatre and popular entertainments? Pavis asserts that there no longer appears to be any
consensus on what popular theatre constitutes neglecting to acknowledge McNamara’s categories of popular entertainments. Bim Mason’s paper, *Popular Theatre: a contradiction in terms* (1997) starts with a dissection of the two words that comprise the term, *popular* and *theatre*, highlighting the magnitude of meanings associated with each word and musing on the blurred boundaries between the two concepts.

Mason argues that implicit hierarchies are suggested within these terms and that disciplines *not* traditionally recognised as ‘theatre’ by the arts establishment such as, commercial musicals, spectacles, street theatre, circus and concerts, be included in the definition of theatre (Mason, 1997). This is at odds with McNamara’s assertion that these forms remain under the distinct categories of popular theatre, popular entertainments, and environmental entertainment. McNamara critiques Mayer and Richards’ definition of popular theatre as used in the collection of conference papers collated in *Western Theatre: the proceedings of a symposium sponsored by the Manchester University Department of Drama* (1977), arguing that omitting to discuss the structural principles that separate the vast forms grouped under popular theatre makes it difficult for a scholar to navigate the field. For scholars, thirty years, on the versatility and adaptability of popular entertainments have vastly expanded the foci of the field and yet, the tracking of changes is still elusive. However, the application of structural principles based on traditional forms used to workably organise popular performances into types was a valuable outcome of the 1977 *Conference on the History of American Popular Entertainment*, held in New York. Categories for discussion included Popular Theatre; melodrama, tent repertory, farce; Popular Entertainments including variety entertainments
such as circus, vaudeville, burlesque, medicine shows and environmental entertainment; the travelling carnival or theme and amusement park. There are two major types of environmental entertainment: those that temporarily reframe an existing location such as a park or street in a self-contained environment such as a street fair, or in the more complex self-contained environment of the travelling carnival, where independently housed attractions operate simultaneously. In these environments the spectator shapes their own experience of the event by combining different elements of the environment. For example the spectator may go on a ride, play a series of amusements, and then watch a short show (McNamara, 1979).

John Bull’s identification of the slipperiness of popular theatre and entertainments is important for it emphasises the celebrated aspect of ambiguity that distinguishes these forms (Bull, 1994, p. 27). They cannot be fixed into one place for it is the nature of these styles to traverse into other zones of performance; its protean nature is also one of the strengths of the genre. However, David Mayer questions the necessity or desirability of defining a boundary at all, arguing that “…a definition must aim at limiting, at fixing boundaries, at excluding apparent irrelevancies, whereas our present experience with popular theatre emphasises the contrary” (Mayer & Richards, 1977, p. 257). This view is problematic in that it provides no in-depth definition to guide the scholar entering the “large and amorphous” field that Mayer and Richards “loosely and inadequately, but conveniently call popular theatre” (Mayer & Richards, 1977, p. 256). Mayer’s rejection of fixing a boundary around popular styles performance is also liberating. It allows for my research to investigate broader ideas about performance as way to understand culture and social behaviour. Bull’s description, although
still broadly grouped under popular theatre highlights the point that boundaries between popular theatre and popular entertainments are fundamentally unstable.

In my search to locate my research into a field of inquiry I return to Mason. He emphasises the difference between popular and popularity suggesting instead that the term points to a relationship to political, social and cultural identity, that it implies a ‘universal theatre’ whereby elements include “a shared event, direct contact between performer and spectator underscored by the absence of the fourth wall, participation, visual spectacle and the demonstration of a skill or ‘craft’…” (Mason, 1997, p. 2). The fourth wall is a theatrical term that implies a separation between audience and performer exists unless specifically disrupted by the style of performance (as in Brechtian theatre, or by the encouragement of audience in participation by an emcee at the cabaret or circus). In popular entertainments the concept of the fourth-wall used in conventional literary theatre is absent.

The staging of speigeltent performance ‘foregrounds aspects of ‘universal’ and ‘popular’ performance applying the concepts popular entertainments as follows;

• It is a temporary self-contained space;

• Performers reflexively commentate on their performance as a form of interaction;

• Visual spectacle is intrinsic to the experience via the performance of high skill;

• The fourth wall is dissolved spatially and performatively;
• Spectators participate using performative gestures such as applause, heckling, cheering to demonstrate approval etc. partially producing their own experience.

By tracing the origins to orientate the staging of genre in *La Clique* at ‘The Famous’ I am highlighting the diversity, fluidity and impermanence of popular entertainments, and drawing attention to the camouflaged often subversive meanings embedded in the interactions between spectators and performers. By understanding the genre and their staging I can focus the enquiry of the use of this style of performance as form of communication between spectators and performers offstage. It also highlights why attempts to define popular entertainments remains contested. The difference in genre are analysed in this research to locate clues about the use of aspects of each genre in ‘spiegeltent performance’.

**Performativity and restored behaviour: Encounters with self and others**

Performance theorists broadened the view of text to include concepts of embodiment and representation demonstrated through the concept of performativity. The concept of performative speech was first articulated by speech act theorist A.L Austin (1962) who questioned how *saying* something and doing something differ. Austin asserted that it is not only what is said that matters, but how the act and manner of speaking transfers meaning. How something is enunciated is therefore of central importance to understanding identity. This examination of language has resonated in theoretical writings in literature and philosophy, and is the central question explored by literary, performance, and linguistic theorists interested in performative utterances (Parker & Sedgwick, 1995). Poststructuralist
Jacques Derrida (1982) and gender theorist Judith Butler (1990, 1999, 2011) draw on Austin’s research to examine how speech came to be ‘read’ as a text embodying identity. Parker explains that both theorists agree “identities are constructed iteratively through citational processes” (Parker & Sedgwick, 1995, p. 2). Butler’s notion of repetition is influenced by Jacques Derrida’s post structural deconstruction of logocentric thought. Derrida argued (2013) that the totalitarian implications of logocentric reason did not accommodate the observer in the making of meaning. The relationship between words or signs was acknowledged as making meaning but controversially at the time, Derrida asserted that the observer created structures of meaning as much as the sign itself created them. This meaning was created through the performative process of iteration.

The ‘performative utterance’ described by Butler is part of a process of repetition, whereby bodily gestures, movements and enactments repeat themselves into disappearance or invisibility, making behaviour appear natural. All utterances are performative acts according to Butler, for the ‘doing’ of the word is the act of informing. Performative utterances are a “reiteration of the norm or set of norms” constructed within the codes and conventions of an individual’s culture (2011, p. 241). They are performed as part of an ongoing embodiment of inherited behaviours. Butler’s groundbreaking theory regarding gender and the construction of identity used the term performativity to describe behaviours that influence how something or someone ‘performs’ identity. Butler argues that gender is in no way stable and is emergent in its acting out. The performance of self refers to conscious and unconscious behaviour including speech and gestures that are repeated over time; the repetition of these acts is what links them to the
concept of performance. Butler explains that the repetition of a “stylized repetition of acts” such as “a person’s gestures, clothes, habits and specific embodied acts are performed differently depending on the gender as well as race, class and so forth of the individual” (Butler, 2011, p. 136).

In performance studies and performance anthropology, Schechner (2003) arguing one of the defining features of performance is ‘restored behaviour’ or ‘twice-behaved’ behaviour Schechner was inspired by Goffman’s use of dramaturgical metaphor to interpret human behaviour in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959). Schechner expanded Goffman’s ‘strip’ of human behaviour (a series of repeated to gestures that make up a social interaction) to refine perceptions of performance. Like performativity, restored behaviour emphasises links between the social and cultural construction of identity, and conscious and unconscious behaviour. Similar to the performative utterance, it encompasses being and doing. Schechner (2002) emphasises the distinction between these two concepts:

> Being is existence itself. Doing is the activity of all that exists…Being may be active of static, linear, or circular, expanding or contracting, material or spiritual…“Doing” and “showing doing” are actions…are always in flux, always changing reality. (p. 28)

Schechner argues that restored behaviour sits between being and doing. It encompasses a range of behaviours that include scripted and non-scripted performances, and a degree of participation that is gestural and active including:

> Physical or verbal, or virtual actions that are not-for-the first-time; that are prepared or rehearsed. A person may not be aware that she is performing a strip of restored behaviour. (p. 29)
The restored behaviour, of the circus folk ‘at the door’ of ‘The Famous’ is both symbolic and reflexive. Applying Derrida, the spectator creates meaning from the signs and symbols of the performance presented, and as such, the conventions of popular entertainments actively encourage spectators to engage in restored behaviour to partially produce their own experience. This is demonstrated by the clothing worn by front-of-house staff, and by the role-based gestures they employ to create a simulacrum of bohemia, circus, and vaudeville for the spectator to receive and respond to.

For example, the use of phrase, “the experience starts at the door” to describe the way in which house staff greeted spectators at the door of the tent, appeared almost mantra-like when repeated by several of the interviewees. Creative Producer, Brett Haylock appeared to be the instigator of this narrative, along with Bates. Haylock’s used this phrase as a catch-all to describe his styling of the event which includes; the relationship between the tent; the crew and the ticketed performance; the tent and the show. It dominated the narrative shared about the tent in all twelve of the interviews. I mobilized this phrase, using it in the documentary to identify the concept of “the experience starts at the door” as central aspect of the cultural narrative continually co-constructed by the crew and creative team. It represents the essence of the notion of ‘spiegeltent performance’ as restored behavior that emerged from the interview analysis and was subsequently cut into the research documentary.

Another example that reveals the relationship between genre, space and performance emerged in the interviews when interviewees (Appendix 2), were asked why spectator’s returned to the venue, Haylock explained,

Haylock: The experience starts at the door… at the ticket booth in The Spiegel Garden… As soon as they arrive… it’s a tip of the Trilby… Its old fashioned, variety, vaudeville, cabaret… wink, wink, nudge, nudge… But the experience starts at the door…” (My emphasis).

Flick Ferdinando, (Guest Director of La Clique, Sydney Festival, 2009) responded similarly:

Ferdinando: It’s pure Barnum and Bailey…. It’s show biz… As soon you enter… as soon as you get to the door, the experience starts… its;
‘Madam, may I take your coat? May I show you to your seat?’”. It’s show biz.”

Mikey Martens (English Emcee and House Manager, 2008-2010): At first I didn’t see it as a performance… I was the House Manager and I introduced the show, welcomed them to the tent. I mean it is the most beautiful room in the business…but after awhile it changed… The experience starts at the door, in the queue, out the front… and it is my job… our job to make it special, to talk to them [the spectators]…to welcome them to the tent, they are our guests. They have come to see us… the circus ‘carnies’… they [the spectators] want to play, they want it to be a little bit risqué, a little bit naughty…you know…wink, wink nudge… and it’s my job to do that with them…”

It was through the repeated viewing of the interviews conducted with crew-members, and key creatives who manage the tent, (Creative Producer Brett Haylock and David Bates, owner/Executive Producer), that the notion of a ‘spiegeltent aesthetic’ emerged and was cut into the documentary for analysis. All emphasized that the “Spiegel aesthetic” evolved over time and in a rather organic fashion. Owner Bates recalls the evolution,

Bates: People who come to the tent didn’t always wear 1920’s suits and hats …that kind of evolved over time…but now op shop and second hand stores always sell out in the towns we visit, because the spectators have adopted that style…

Simon Barfoot, (Front of house manager at The Famous Spiegeltent, 2001-2008) was asked, “ Why do the crew wear waistcoats and Trilby’s?”

Barfoot: That was completely down to Brett…Brett Haylock … When he came on board he brought with him this vintage style- waistcoats and Trilby’s… and everyone sort of started wearing it. It just fit. It married beautifully with the 1920s aesthetic of the tent, the art deco mirrors… and it stuck. it was a natural fit and, and it became the spiegeltent aesthetic and… and its been like that ever since…and in the tent… its real.. It’s an original, unique 1920s mirror tent. It’s authentic…

His response repeatedly emphasized the origin and importance of what the house crew wore, and the “aesthetic of the tent”. This performance
of identity by the crew expressed via the use of performative language and
dress or ‘aesthetic’ is central to my investigation and informs the idea of
‘spiegeltent performance’ as restored behaviour.

In her seminal work, *Gender Trouble* (1990), Butler deconstructs the
calendar of identity via the lens of gender and heteronormativity. Butler’s
work has significantly influenced the evolution of feminist and queer
theory, and the politics of culture, power, and society through her analysis
and engagement with otherness. Although my research does not draw
deeply on Butler’s theory of performativity and identity construction in
relationship to gender and queerness, it does examine the concept of the
‘other’ in performance via the concept of performativity. Butler’s theory of
gender performativity, for which she is best known, includes concepts of
repetition, performative utterances and citational or reiterative practice
(1993) Butler’s appropriation of Austin’s idea (via Derrida), that language
is performative, which developed into her theory of performativity asserts
language, bodies and gestures are performative, and contribute to the
construction of identity. It is this notion of the performativity and its related
terms performance and performative I apply to interpret ‘spiegeltent
performance’. I acknowledge there is slippage between the uses of
performance as when referring to La Clique and to the performance of the
house-staff and spectators. When referring the construction or performance
of identity as ‘performative’ I am drawing on Butler. When referring to act
of communication as performance I am drawing on its meaning from
performance studies. I endeavor to highlight these nuances for consistency.

Inter-subjectivity has a relationship to transgression and otherness
insofar as by encountering difference within the bounded space of the
Fringe festival, concepts of self and social identity are constituted and
reconstituted, or as Judith Butler (1990) would argue, constructed, located and inscribed. In *Bodies that Matter* (1993, pg. 12), her account of performativity concentrates on bodily practice and gestures, than on language as it did it in earlier work. Initially, Butler disavowed theatre as comparable to performativity, it should not be thought of as a deliberate “act” by which a ‘subject brings into being what he/she names’. Identity in relation to gender is not, as Butler explains a ‘voluntarist’ act. She confirms that performativity is a ‘reiterative or citational practice’ that has the ‘reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains’ (1993:2). By conceptualizing performativity as a citational practice, Butler asserts that it is recycling or repetition of a set of conventions (1993, pg. 107). In her case what is being repeated is a set of gestures or language that has an historical context and that generate an gendered identity or the concept of femininity. Over time the repetition of acts that constitute this notion of femininity- hips swaying, or sitting with ones knees together, are interpreted as the ‘norm’. I apply this notion of repetition to the performative identities of the offstage performers. I acknowledge that to a degree the behavior is chosen, but I argue that still sits in the realm of the performative because the display of identity has become a citational process, evolved a period of time that is now associated with ‘normal’ behaviour at the tent. The repetition of performative communication or ‘spiegeltent performance’ is normalized and continually restored.

Some readers interpret the subversion of heteronormativity in Gender Trouble and apply it to the politics of drag performance. In *Bodies That Matter* (2004), Butler argues that subversion can only occur from within,
and that the adoption of drag only serves to reinforce the status quo when used in actual performances in popular culture. When attempting to determine whether it is possible to differentiate between subversive and non-subversive performance, Butler argues that it is through the denaturalization that the power of a term can be called to account. For example the reclaiming of the term ‘queer’, historically a pejorative term, it has been reclaimed to validate a lifestyle, identity and previously used to denigrate it (Lloyd, 2007). At ‘The Famous’ the cast and crew have reclaimed the use of the term ‘carnies’ to describe their collective performative identity. This historically derogatory term used to describe the circus travellers, at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century in Australia and the United Kingdom, is now used as an affectionate descriptor that celebrates the contemporary iteration of the itinerant circus traveler embodied as other by ‘The Famous’ cast and crew. I apply performativity to examine the skein that separates the performer from the spectator and how this membrane is traversed using performative utterances.

Performance theorists including Denzin (2003) and Soyini Madison (2005) cite the influence of Wallace Bacon’s (1972) examination of the other in literary texts. Bacon analysed the relationship between elocution, oral interpretation and the performance of literature. He extended the reading of a literary text to include the interpretation and performance of the text in front of an audience. Bacon’s theorization of these processes laid the foundations for theories examining what he called the “otherness of the other”. Bacon argued that encountering and interpreting a text is to come into contact with another way of being, “For the interpreter, belief in the otherness of the text, full awareness of its state of being, is a major stage in
mastering the art of performance” (Bacon, 1979, p. 40). This move led to the conceptualization of social processes associated with performance and the integration of performance analysis with social sciences (Madison & Hamera, 2005).

Bacon draws on Wheelwright’s description of the other, to interpret the affect presence, have on social dynamics.

A person’s sense of presence is likely to be most strongly marked and most incontestably evident in his relationship, at a certain heightened moment with another human person…To know someone as a presence instead of as a lump of matter of a set of processes, is to meet him with an open, listening, responsive attitude; it is to become thou in the presence of his I-hood. (Wheelwright, 1962, pg. 154 cited by Bacon, 1979, p. 40)

The genres of vaudeville, burlesque and cabaret disrupt reading of the text of a performance from a literary point of view as performers embody the texts. The performance of other manifests itself through an identity fundamentally linked to the form it is generating, i.e. it relies on genre to transfer meaning. I apply this idea to the interactions at ‘The Famous’. For example, I observed that spectators arrive at, and frequently return to ‘The Famous’, adopting the distinctive cabaret bohemian dress style of the house staff. The house staff loosely adopt role using a blend of the genres of vaudeville, cabaret and variety to communicate. They invite spectators to participate in the show through dancing and interacting with the acts. In this sense spectators adopt a role in order to participate, and are partially adopting the role of the performer, using the gestures described above. The non-performers use performance to co-create the communicative frame with for spectators. The performer’s actions affects the spectator and the
spectator’s response affect the performer, this circular relationship relies on the presence of ‘other’.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett defines a performance event as, “an organizing concept for examining phenomena that may or may not be performance in the conventional sense of the word…[including] museum exhibitions, tourist environments and the aesthetic of everyday life” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2001, p. 218). The interaction between the non-performers and spectators is an-other performance event within the ‘real’ or ‘actual’ event. It is a performance based in role-play rather than the execution of a specific skill or set of skills. Applying Shechner’s notion of restored behaviour to this performance within the performance determines that the dynamic between spectators and the (non)-performers is a fluid ongoing event, which has the potential to “…mark, and bend identity, performing slightly or radically different selves in different situations” (Schechner, 2003, p. 362). Applying Kirschenblatt-Gimblett’s ‘performance event’ to this performance-based communication can be applied to describe ‘spiegeltent performance’. The “play of difference” constructed by a Fringe festival’s theatricalisation of social encounters creates a space for informal interactions to occur that construct, deconstruct and reconstruct social identity (Willems-Braun, 1994). If the disruption of boundaries between performing and spectating can be viewed as “interventions” then a performance event has the potential to transgress these boundaries. This challenges conventional approaches to the spectator/performer interactions and their meaning (Denzin, 2002).

I am suggesting that the spectator is partially performing for the performer and this is in line with the expected behaviour of the festival
participant who responds to the cues around her. However, I am expanding the partial participation through performance to include the performers. When the spectator capitulates and performs their role as cued by the performers and the cues in the Fringe environment, I question how this disrupts the role of the performer. It follows that the performer becomes the spectator of this other performance embodied by the spectator. The performer becomes a partial spectator and the spectator becomes a partial performer.

The behaviour of the festival participant as illuminated by Schechner in his Basic Principles of Performance (1999), starts well before the ticketed performance begins. Schechner (2003) argues that artists and performers voluntarily participate in a ‘chosen culture’ to express cultural identity using an embodied performativity framed through and by performance. The relationship between festival participants and notions of performance and performativity is identifiable is therefore a ‘culture of choice’ (Freeman, 2006, p. 364). The concept of cultural performance therefore connects to Turner’s (1982) ‘cultural actor’. Participants become cultural actors by encounters with otherness that have the potential to deepen an understanding of their own culture. Wendy Clupper’s PhD (2007) thesis about the performance culture of Burning Man Festival describes the cultural actor as someone whose behaviour is framed through and by performance. Clupper explains for the cultural actor, “knowledge of their own culture and their role in it is bound up in ones actions including the mode of play, playful mimesis, and in the cultural setting where a performative mode is demanded in terms of participation” (Clupper, 2007, p. 24). Bauman draws on Goffman’s notion of ‘platform events’ and
‘celebrative social occasion’ to demonstrate the way in which a spectator is
distanced from a performance (Bauman, 2011, p. 715). Cultural
performance like ‘celebrative social occasions’ such as festivals, weddings,
fairs and spectacles offer an opportunity to interact in multiple spaces,
across a specific time frame in order to celebrate in a more unified activity
than standing back watching a singular event such as a concert or poetry
reading, (a platform event). The reflexive nature of cultural performances
provides a way to examine how performativity and performance are
potential conduits for shifting social dynamics and facilitating shared
experience.

.. The restored behaviour embodied by the spectator is what
transforms them from passive participant to cultural actor. The performative
action also transforms the experience of the performer who watches the
spectator’s emerging performance. The performer simultaneously becomes
a partial spectator participating in the partial performance of spectator.
Therefore all of the participants have deconstructed and reconstructed a
performance of self, facilitated by a performative encounter with other. It is
the performative interaction that creates the fissure disrupting the separation
between the everyday life of the spectator and the performer. The repetition
of the “set of norms” that define the context of the environment at the tent
privileges the performance of difference. Through participation and
performance the ‘other’ is normalized or centered, and the distance between
self and other is reduced through the co-creation of shared experience. The
way in which participants shift from one role to another is symbiotic, and
unstable. The ‘text’ is embodied, fluid, unspoken, facilitated by play using
performance, rather than from a script with stage directions to follow. The
link between speech, interpretation, text, and otherness is subsequently linked to two other concepts of performance studies drawn from the postmodern and post structural paradigm: dialogism and intertextuality. I am examining these concepts to further understand the interplay between the traditions of performance associated with the tent, and their links to the space of Bakhtin’s notion of carnival. I am also investigating these concepts to trace the links between medieval carnival and the contemporary Fringe festival.

**Dialogism and intertextuality at ‘The Famous’**

Literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin’s (1968) theory of dialogism argues that all discourse in literature and speech is an intersection of multiple voices. Bakhtin (1968) uses the medieval carnival and its subversive social context as a lens through which to analyse the fecund literary works of medieval French poet Rabelais. From this research his theory of the carnival and concepts including the carnivalesque, dialogism, and grotesque realism emerged.

Traditionally carnival was a pre-Lenten festival of feudal origins that symbolized release and renewal after harvest times. Carnivals occurred in bounded spaces and involved elaborate rituals marked by playful behaviour that interrupted boundaries between the real and enacted world. For Bakhtin the carnival is a metaphor for a time of ‘licensed mayhem’ that provided participants with a finite time and space to “ape, parody and parallel” the behaviour of the hierarchies that controlled society (Bakhtin, 1968, p. 12). The world was turned ‘upside-down’ and the temporary reversal of order, when the low became high and the high became low was the focus of
Bakhtin’s of study of ‘the popular’, a domain separate to the dominant hierarchy with its own logic and aesthetic.

Bakhtin uses the term *carnival* to encompass his studies of *Mardi gras*, fairs, and other popular, cyclical, ritual events that included the reversal of hierarchies in their festivities. Hall explains that Bakhtin’s ‘carnivalesque’ includes the dialogic language of the market place such as colloquialisms, folk talk and oaths, rituals games and performances. This use of language celebrated the ‘lower bodily principle’ (the lower zones of the body), which reversed the privileging of discreet, polite conduct using the ‘grotesque’ image of the body (Hall, 1993, p. 7).

The use of the lower bodily principal as a strategy to transgress everyday life during carnival is evident in the excessive, humorous, vulgar, multi-voiced language used by Rabelais in his tales of French medieval carnival. In *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (the source of Bakhtin’s influential analysis of the carnival), Rabelais used comedic playful, lustful and at times crude verse to evoke the ‘voices of the people’ participating in carnival. Bakhtin argues that Rabelais’ disruptive use of imagery embodies the constructed chaotic and permissive environment of the carnival. In this setting the heteroglossic voices of participants exemplify the ambiguous nature of carnival. Heteroglossic is the term Bakhtin uses to encompass the multiple voices that make the carnival live, each voice contributing to the chaotic celebratory environment. Bakhtin’s carnival is “not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people” (Bakhtin, 1968, p. 27).

Bakhtin argues that the author plays the role of the ringmaster, caroling the voices within a narrative, yet significantly it is the reader who
negotiates meaning and therefore becomes the participant (Bakhtin, 1968). The privileging of the reader as ‘participant’ evokes Derrida’s rejection of logo centric interpretations of language, emphasizing the importance of the observer or spectator. By extending texts to encompass speech acts or ‘voices’ enacted through language and the body, Bakhtin’s literary critique of Rabelais’ verse emphasized the lower strata of culture. This was a place where the multiplicity of styles of language signified a domain of resistance and inversion. He referred to this sphere as dialogic.

Jenks interprets Bakhtin’s dialogic view of language as one that “asserts that every speech act is held, reflexively, between the preceding utterance which generated it, and the anticipated future response which will structure it” (Jenks, 2003, p. 165). This view of language evokes Butler’s theory of performativity as a ‘stylized repetition of acts’. It is the confluence between doing, speaking, and being that creates meaning—symbolic and mundane. Importantly, Bakhtin argues that the language of the carnival has a life and an aesthetic that purposefully disrupts the hierarchies and binaries that signify day-to-day life. Bakhtin (1968) explains that:

This temporary suspension, both ideal and real, of hierarchical rank created during carnival time was a special kind of communication impossible in everyday life. This led to special forms of marketplace speech and gesture, frank and free permitting no distance between those who came into contact with each other and liberating from norms of etiquette and decency imposed at other times. A special marketplace style of expression was formed we find abundantly represented in Rabelais’ novel. (p. 10)

The aesthetic of the carnival was laden with imagery pertaining to the ‘material bodily principle’. Part of this involves the collapsing of distance between the transcendental, spiritual, high domain of those in power to the
earth-bound world of ‘the people’, an “intrinsic reversibility of the symbolic order” (Hall, 1993, p. 7). The inversion of the symbolic order gives access to the realm of ‘the popular’, the ‘below’ of the underworld. Fertility, growth, excess, copulation and abundance were favoured by the lowering of all that was exalted by the hierarchies, and this transfer to the material symbolised a return to the “collective ancestral body” (Bakhtin, 1968, p. 19). This inversion of hierarchy was manifested through masquerade, costume and the exaggeration of the lower bodily realm encompassed by the term “grotesque realism” (Holquist, 2002, p. 19). Masquerade and costume was used to exaggerate the genitalia, bottom, and stomach all grossly distorted in celebration of this ‘collective body’. The link to libidinal rebellion is what Hall argues makes carnival a “potent metaphor for social and symbolic transformation” (Hall, 1993, p. 7). Traditionally, Michael Holquist explains, this embodiment of the ‘grotesque’ sought to “consecrate inventive freedom … liberate the prevailing view of the world from conventions and established truths, all that is humdrum and accepted” (Holquist, 2002, p. 34). The logic of ‘grotesque realism’ challenges the dominance of reason and order as the only legitimate place for critique to manifest. The carnival and fairground, as interpreted by Stallybrass and White (1986):

…unsettles ‘given’ social positions and interrogates the rules of inclusion, exclusion and domination which structured the social ensemble. In the fair, the place of the high and low, inside and out was never a simple given: the languages of decorum and enormity ‘peered into each other’s faces. (p. 43)

Bakhtin’s grotesque realism suggests that to transgress the forbidden, the unspoken, is to expose the inevitability of death, encouraging an
appreciation of the value of life. Bakhtin’s theorization of carnival as a subversion of the status quo suggests that to bring to earth all that was high minded, ideal and abstract, temporarily returned social control to the folk of the carnival through the use of subversion and laughter. For example his theorization of Rabelais’ carnivalesque writing highlighted the lampooning of fear by comic monsters defeated by laughter, where monsters symbolically represent figures of authority.

Popular entertainments thrived in carnival environments. The form and style of pantomime, clowning, minstrelsy, and *commedia dell’arte* all used stock characters to poke fun at societal structures and norms. The inversion of role, one of the distinguishing features of carnivalesque behaviour, was played out in these performances as commentary on the cultural contexts of the day. Bakhtin interprets the laughter of the carnival as the “laughter of all the people” highlighting its ambivalence and universality as a key aspect of resistance and inversion. This festive laughter is “universal in scope it is directed at all and everyone including the carnival’s participants” (Bakhtin, 1968, p. 12). Traces of this kind of commentary can be found in the alternative environment of the Fringe festival. Collectively spectators in these Western environments are not as stratified as they were in the Middle Ages. They are not collectively reliant on agrarian cycles nor controlled by the church or God, yet the essence of carnival and its spirit of unification is still present.

*La Clique* represents the intersection of multiple voices during carnival, illustrating the dialogic of the carnival. The show draws on the conventions of traditional popular entertainments, reflecting Bakhtin’s concept of grotesque realism and the celebration of libidinal rebellion.
Characters in *La Clique* suggestively swallow objects, playfully expose their bodies and blatantly subvert gender stereotypes. The performances conjure “carnival laughter” provoking spectators to laugh at themselves and more broadly at society’s sacred cows. They confidently tread the line between the performance of high skill and spectacle insulating the spectators from offence by including them in the joke. The “special communication” (Bakhtin, 1968, p. 10) experienced during carnival in the marketplace is echoed by the performative interaction between spectators and performers at ‘The Famous’ during the Fringe. The interactions at the tent are outside everyday life and distance is collapsed between role rather than rank. The transformative experience for participants does not invert hierarchy, however, it creates the potential for the experience of the individual to be transformed into an experience of the group. The ‘othering’ of the carnival space at ‘The Famous’ facilitates the blurring of role between spectator and performer furthering encouraging the temporary formation of an-other community. This embodies the symbolic communication of the carnival, and is facilitated by the desire to experience otherness. The blurring of role at the tent is not quite inversion, (as in carnival), however, it is a disruption that transgresses everyday boundaries manifested through and by performances that occur on and off stage. I apply Bakhtin’s notion of carnival to suggest that spectators might be seeking ‘release and renewal’ to find symbolic meaning by turning back to a dialogic community that opens boundaries between being and doing or observing and participating. In a contemporary context, the temporary transition from everyday life to festival life is voluntary, yet also holds the potential for symbolic experience
for participants. This is activated by the shared experience of performing and spectating otherness at the dialogic Fringe.

The dialogic carnival encompasses multiple subject positions and forms the basis of feminist theorist Julia Kristeva’s concept of intertextuality. The multiple voices at play in La Clique at ‘The Famous’ are an example of the concept of intertextuality. I am applying the concept of intertextuality to further illustrate links between the dialogic carnival, popular entertainments, and Fringe festivals using La Clique as an example. Kristeva extended Bakhtin’s dialogism to formulate her influential theory, asserting that one text is formed by a series of intersections with multiple texts. This theory first appeared in Kristeva’s 1969 essay Word, Dialogue, and the Novel, as part of a post structuralist critique of the modern novel suggesting that every text is “constructed as a mosaic of quotations” (p. 66). Intertextuality proposes that a text represents an, “intersection of textual surfaces rather than a point (a fixed meaning)” (1969, p. 65; emphasis in original). I am acknowledging the intertextual influences in La Clique at ‘The Famous’ by creating a performative genealogy. By interrogating what Schechner describes as the ‘whole’ performance event by identifying and analyzing the significance of the interactions between these multiple texts, I am uncovering the processes by which it gains meaning, as well as the elements that resist fixed meaning. The tension between fixed meaning and disrupted meanings is a fundamental principle of performance analysis (Schechner, 2003).

Postmodern performance theory examined experimental performance movements that emerged from the world of visual art such as happenings and avant-garde practices including performance art and installation. This
research incorporated post structural concepts that disrupted the dominance of analysis based on literary texts. Concepts introduced included: representation and intertextuality; play rather than mimesis; and slippage between subjectivity and individuality as navigation tools for understanding contemporary cultural practice (Burvill, 1998). Postmodernist works tended towards deconstruction of ‘high art’, using forms that appeal to popular culture; cartoons, pastiche, pop art, television, most recently social media and YouTube. Burvill argued that the term “…names a recognizable set of styles, like playful allusion in architectural decoration; the foregrounding of intertextuality and play with genres in advanced performance…a celebration of popular culture” (Burvill, 1998, p. 184). More recently, Parker and Sofosky (2005) argue the increased scholarly recognition of a performative dimension beyond the “classic ontology of black box theatre” (p. 2) has opened up the field of performance studies to include postmodern concepts of performance. Postmodern performance disrupts theories seeking an origin of meaning, arguing that any given text is comprised of pre-existing textual elements. Intertextuality, as expressed through postmodern performance theory, is congruent with my study of popular entertainments that borrow tricks or turns in order to re-present them in a new context. This borrowing, sharing and blurring of form/s indicates that there is no one author and that each ‘author’ is influenced by the texts that have come before her (Allen, 2003).

Traditionally tricks or turns in American vaudeville and traditional circus were passed through families. Numerous theatre historians specializing in analysis of popular entertainments such as American Vaudeville, British circus and burlesque entertainment have analysed the
familial relationships that form within these communities and how these relationships shape the creation of the performances (Carmeli, 1988, McNamara, 1974, 1998, 2001, Wertheim, 2006, Snyder, 1989, Buszek, 1999, Willson, 2007, Lemon). ‘Family’ in circus traditions is also in a sense intertextual for the family member is not necessarily a blood relative. The familial reference is borne out of the communal experience of living, working and travelling within a tight knit community that forms bonds akin to family. These familial structures paved the way for those born into the troupe to learn the skills inherited from previous generations. The oral traditions associated with the peripatetic life of the vaudevillians and circus families are well documented in historical biographies, although the critical dimension in these works is limited (McNamara, 2001). These stories, generated by the performers are a fundamental feature of the life of the travelling entertainer. The tales of previous performances, sharing of skills and content are in fact the ‘texts’ that exist to perpetuate the identities and performances that have contributed to the evolution of these forms in their modern incarnations. Narrative is therefore central to the construction of group identity and this complex construction is influenced not only by the aesthetic production of the circus itself, but also by the tendency for memory to shape events of the past to suit the present, alongside the historical moment in time (Riessman, 2008, pg. 8). In this sense La Clique reflects intertextual and postmodern approaches to performance – pastiche is a hallmark of its style; performers draw content from multiple pasts, eclectically combining pulp-trash love stories with epic operatic scores, ironically transgressing representations of women, bodies, and power. Roland Barthes’ assertion that the deconstruction and post structural(5,6),(995,996)
of texts as, “multi-dimensional space in which are married and contested several writings, none of which is original” is relevant here. Barthes goes on to clarify that “… the text is a fabric of quotations, resulting from a thousand sources of culture” (Barthes & Howard, 1989, p. 53). This acknowledgement of the multiple voices present in any given text contributes to my analysis of slippery forms of performance. The ‘multi-dimensional’ space of a text is illustrated by the blurred boundaries traversed by popular entertainments re-presented in performances such as *La Clique*. The blurring of genre in the staging of contemporary cabaret/circus directly influences the co-creation of offstage performance using the conventions of popular entertainments extending the ‘fabric of quotations’ even further. The interaction and improvisations that include the audience become part of the text. For example, often a spontaneous moment of interaction between a performer and spectator will be kept by the performer and added into the act.

My construction of a genealogy of the staging of genre at ‘The Famous’ and the Fringe has included the use of literary concepts influenced by carnival such as dialogism, and intertextuality. I have used these concepts to investigate links between carnival and the contemporary environment of the Fringe. ‘The Famous’ and *La Clique* are an example of how these concepts of carnival resonate in contemporary settings fostered by references to past and present aspects of popular culture and performance. The intertextual nature of *La Clique*, and the broader experience of visiting ‘The Famous’ embody notions of performativity informed by the intersection of multiple voices converging in a playful environment. Identifying parallels between the performative behaviour
enacted at carnival and Fringe using the lens of dialogism and intertextuality has therefore deepened my understanding of the way the performative interplay and social dynamics at the tent can be positioned as a transgression toward otherness for both performers and spectators.

**Staging and other spaces**

The itinerant nature of popular entertainments and the ‘absence’ of a fixed sense of place have attracted traditionalist criticism of the relevance of pleasure and leisure oriented performance genres (Emeljanow & Arrighi, 2009, p. 1). Discussing the staging of performance in the space in which the performance is constructed, (‘The Famous’ at the Fringe arts festival) directly informs how and why spectators and performers interact. Spatial configurations open or close boundaries between participants and have the potential to foster connection or not. If participants attending a Fringe festival event at ‘The Famous’ are curious to experience otherness, then it follows that analyzing it as an example of other space, and a space for others, is of central concern to my research. Edward Casey writes that cultural landscapes make and are made by their inhabitants and the performative landscape at ‘The Famous’, whilst transitory and temporally bounded, continues to be located ephemerally after it leaves, for its memory traces are present in the lived experience of those who visited (1998). Casey asserts that place, in light of an increasingly global monoculture of space in Western American political and economic paradigms, makes the human subject yearn for a “diversity of places” a “difference-of-place” (Casey, 1998, p. xxi). The difference of place sought encompasses spaces of otherness; the difference-of-place represented by the space of the Fringe festival. Prior to Casey, Schechner (1985) argued that spectators were
gravitating toward what was once the village market place to interact in environments, (such as festivals), conducive to celebration and release that use performance. Historically non-traditional theatre spaces such as the circular tent of the circus, the intimate café setting of the cabaret or the street performances of *commedia dell’arte* encouraged players to disrupt the traditional separation of the audiences from performers found in conventional theatres that featured a proscenium archway onstage. The theatres may have been aesthetically beautiful, but the proscenium arch separates the audience from the performance and the players. However, it is important to note that not all popular entertainments reject proscenium arch configurations. American vaudeville (1900s-1930s) thrived in the new theatrical venues created to attract new audiences- the middle classes. Entrepreneurs built opulent vaudeville houses designed to emulate elite theatres in Europe and abolish echoes of its origins in dime-museums and travelling tent shows (Londra, 2007).

The Famous Spiegeltent blurs the boundaries between traditional theatre architecture and tent structures used in circus. Its spatial configuration opens up the potential for spectators to interact with staff, performers, and each other. Like his vaudevillian predecessors, David Bates recognised this potential and transformed the way in ‘The Famous’ was programmed, staging cabaret and circus in its luxurious interior. The circular structure, its mobility, the presence of the bar, (open throughout performances) and its mirrored interior exemplify the definition of a site that disrupts uniformity and privileges “identity, character, nuance, [and] history”. It does this by involving the spectator in the co-creation of experience through encounters with difference (Mitchell, 1999, p. xii). Its
aesthetic presence is intrinsic to the ‘lived experience and truth’ of the experience for spectator, cast and crew (Denzin, 1997). Spectators are close to the action and continually invited to be part of it. Performative devices are used to break the division, between spectators and performers in any theatre space (such as dissolving the fourth wall), but the architecture of ‘The Famous’ invites interaction alongside the conventions of the genre performed.

The mobility of ‘The Famous’ is a unique aspect of its spatial character. It exposes it to a diversity of spaces, cultures, and participants in major cities around the world. Cultural theoretician Arjun Appadurai describes the urban landscape as, “An ethnoscape, a fluid landscape of tourists, immigrants, exiles and other moving groups and persons” (1991, p. 33). This description is emulated in the microcosm of ‘The Famous’ at the Fringe. It travels with its own ready-made ‘landscape’ and the ideas of difference, fluidity, and mobility are continually restored there. ‘The Famous’ is also situated in what phenomenologist Henri Lefebvre refers to as a ‘disruptive festival’, a place where citizens create a kind of theatre’ that comes from their playful interactions with each other in the street. (Lefebvre, Kofman, & Lebas, 1996, p. 6). It sits outside a traditional ‘disciplinary system of theatre’, whereby Baz Kershaw drawing on LeFevvre, argues that traditional theatre buildings are “spaces of domination” that perpetuate a “method of spatial indoctrination that aims to embed normative values in the behavior of its participants” (1999, p. 31). These traditional theatre spaces are where the disciplines are mastered and disciplined along with the audience. For example, spaces such as ‘The Famous’ encourage participants to restore the behaviour of the carnival
inside an opulent building, disrupting convention by collapsing hierarchies between seating, ticket prices and clientele.

Carlson’s semiological approach to the interpretation of theatre buildings uses the framework of structural linguistics. Carlson argues that power and privilege are attributed to those who inhabit traditional theatre spaces, and this is a central premise on which to base readings of space (Carlson, 1989). This was certainly the way in which the vaudevillian entrepreneurs re-modeled theatre architecture to discipline the behavior of its audience to reflect a middle-class Victorian genteelism (Bailey, 2003). This reconstruction of space by the producers of vaudeville was inherently political because it persuaded middle class spectators to become part of a group, (travelling performers and actors) previously regarded with suspicion or disdain. If, as Carlson argues, theatres are an example of ‘ludic space’ and that spectators ‘read’ the space they inhabit, then Julian Meyrick adds to this view. He suggests that audiences visiting non-traditional theatre spaces are seeking a ‘real’ experience, a direct encounter with a space that foreshadows the ‘meaning-flow’ of the shows they contain (Meyrick, 2000, p. 155). Owner Bates is dedicated to producing non-traditional theatre in a non-traditional spaces whereby everyone pays the same price and has the same view of the stage, a fact featured in the documentary (Appendix 2, Bates, Personal communication, 2009). This philosophy embeds what Meyrick refers to as, “a cultural exchange of meaning, not just the utilization of an architectural configuration” (Meyrick, 2000, p. 161) into the framing of the experience. Similarly Peter Brook’s approach to the framing of theatre space is an, ‘open circle’ that unites seemingly diverse communities through a shared experience (Brook, 1978, p. 7; Williams,
When renovating *Les Bouffes du Nord* a decrepit, disused theatre in the tenth *arrondissement* a seedy district behind the *Gare du Nord* in 1974, Brook and his producer Micheline Rozan’s desire matched that of David Bates, to ‘open up the terrain’ separating the spectator and performers for the purpose of unity, community and meaningful interaction (Williams, 2002, p. 46). These anti-elitist views of theatre production have origins in popular entertainments, as well as in designated places for ludic celebration such as the medieval carnival and the contemporary arts festival.

As discussed in Chapter One, Fringe festivals utilize non-traditional theatre spaces on the borders in urban environments, such as warehouses, parks, and car parks, alongside more conventional theatre spaces, physically representing the construction of spaces to experience diversity. Willems-Braun argues that the reordering of public space during the Fringe changes social interaction from administration and exchange and replaces it with the structure of festival. This creates a wider discursive arena in which people interact and encounter difference (Willems-Braun, 1994). The signs, symbols, and conventions of the Fringe emphasize diversity and accessibility, “The Fringes remake theatre as festival- repositioning theatre and representation within the chaotic and indeterminate interactions of the street, and making it accessible to a variety of publics” (Willems-Braun, 1994, p. 82). The Fringe event challenges the autonomy of the singular viewer by revealing the construction and ordering of difference as social practice by confronting participants with destabilizing identities in everyday spaces (Willems-Braun, 1994).

Conquergood draws from Bakhtin when arguing that dialogical performance that seeks otherness finds meaning through encounters along
borders and intersections (Conquergood, 1992). ‘The Famous’ is a place
signified by ‘otherness’, in its location on the border spaces of the Fringe
festival and in the style of performance presented by the performers.
Langman and Carmegi assert that globalization has led to the increased
emergence of “transgressive, identity-granting” urban subcultures that
adopt aesthetics of difference because they are seeking community,
recognition and empowerment (Langman & Cangemi, 2003). This argument
compliments Manolis et al.’s (2001) claim that the postmodern consumer is
seeking meaningful experience in service environments introduced in
Chapter One and discussed in Chapter Six. Applying CCT concept of ‘the
partial’, the experience becomes meaningful via performative interaction
with ‘others’; when spectators and performers co-create the experience it
becomes meaningful.

The experience of otherness at ‘The Famous’ involves the crossing of
multiple thresholds: Spectators enter the space of the Fringe, enter The
Spiegel Garden, enter the interior of ‘The Famous”, and enter into an-other
space. In performance theory the idea of the threshold is applied to physical
borders and to ‘betwixt-and-between’ spaces where symbolic crossings
occur. By examining the thresholds that define the spatial relationships at
‘The Famous’ I am making a connection to “ambivalence, ambiguity and
polyvalence; of transgression, subversion and transcendence” (Aguirre,
2011, para 7). Threshold crossing, moving from one space to another,
symbolically and literally, is an intrinsic element to liminoid experience,
and is linked closely to “ludic invention” (Turner, 1982, pp. 31-32). For
Turner, to facilitate liminoid experience for participants creates a type of
community building that engages the subjunctive, reflexive and communal
realm of shared experience. This occurs through the interconnected concepts of liminal, play, drama, sacred truths, and/or a sense of affinity with co-participants (Turner, 1982).

Articulating the link between play and popular styles of performance in ‘other’ spaces also indicates the ludic environment extends beyond the socio-cultural interaction between participants. Nicholas Whybrow uses what he describes as a ‘highly irregular’ expansion of the German word \textit{Schauplatz} to create a link between place, play, and performance in urban spaces. Whybrow expands \textit{Schauplatz} to include \textit{Schau-spiel-platz}, meaning literally ‘a place for viewing’ and/or ‘showing’ (2010, pp. 4-5), making concepts of performance and play explicit. Whybrow uses what he defines as the urban \textit{Shauspielplatz} or ‘place of performance’ as a means to integrate the location where there is both ‘drama for show’ – \textit{Shauspiel}, and playing- \textit{spiel}. The Famous Spiegeltent is such a place; it incorporates Whybrow’s ‘official’ space whereby performances are staged for the spectator, placed within an ‘unofficial’ space for the spectator to participate in the ‘play-ground’ (Whybrow, 2010). Goffman (1975) also emphasises the importance of the role the spectator plays suggesting that they too collaborate to create a sense of place.

[The spectator] sympathetically and vicariously participates in the unreal world generated by the dramatic interplay of the scripted characters. He gives himself over. He is raised (or lowered) to the cultural level of the play. (p. 130)

I identify a synergy between these concepts of play and playing space with Schechner’s research regarding the ‘whole’ performance; the dynamic between space, spectator, and performer (Schechner, 2003), and Lefebvre’s notion of the festival as a site for social revolution.
Audience and reception research investigates the psychological and emotional processes experienced by spectators immediately after or during participation in an event. Shoenmaker and Tulloch, (2004) distinguish theoretical, theoretical-empirical and empirical studies in audience and reception research. Pure theoretical studies do not usually deal with ‘real ‘spectators; this kind of spectator analysis was initially viewed as the domain of the communication scholar or sociologist. Theatre scholars applied concepts such as the ‘ideal spectator’ (Pavis, 1988), to interpret the emotional and psychological responses of audiences using a range of methods including interviews, surveys, focus groups, participatory observation etc. Some methods developed are appropriate for ongoing analyses of audience reception and others focus on the audience reaction when the performance is over. Audience and reception research of ‘actual’ audiences includes sociological approaches that use demographics, the frequency with which people attend the theatre, analysis of gender, class and race and participation in theatrical events etc. This approach includes analysis of the theatrical event itself from the point of view of the theatre-makers and their intended outcome. Psychologically relevant theories are developed to examine the impact of theatrical events and these are then tested with hypotheses. All methods used to research performance are unstable, as the concept in question- performance- is unstable. It is simply not possible to ascertain what every person is feeling or experiencing in response to a theatrical event by applying empirical or theoretical research methods, or a combination of both.

In her seminal work, *Theatre Audiences: A theory of production and reception*, (1997, second ed.), Susan Bennett proposes a discussion of the inner and outer frame of theatrical experience. The outer frame is the cultural context of the theatrical event, audience definitions and expectations of the performance as well as the performance; the inner frame contains the performance and the spectator’s experience of the world created on stage-including aesthetics, ‘ideological over-coding’ of the production and the material conditions of performance. The interaction between these two frames affects spectators understanding of their experience of performance, and in turn ‘performances rewrite cultural assumptions’- this complex interaction is the central concern of Bennett’s research (pg.2). The evolution
of performance theory toward a ‘democratizing of the arts’ was signified by the inclusion of the audience in the construction of the theatrical event, alongside the other creators- performers, writer, director etc. The interdisciplinary approach of performance theory paved the way for the field of the audience response for research. Influenced by the use of theatrical paradigms to inform the development of sociological, psychological and anthropological paradigms developed by Turner about ‘social drama’ alongside Goffman’s concept of frame, which in turn informed Schechner’s notion that of a ‘universal dramatic structure parallel to social process’ (1977, pg. 121, cited in Bennett, pg. 10). Bennett’s interest in what she refers to as ‘the liminalities of performance’ are of use in this research, alongside Schechner. Bennett highlights Schechner’s assertion that the study of the liminal aspect of performance, “…how the audience gets to, and into, the performance place, and how they go from that place; and in what ways this gathering/dispersing is related to the preparations/cooling off aspects of the performer’s work. The coming and going of both performers and audience guarantees (in Goffman’s usage) the ‘theatrical frame’ so that events can be experienced as actual realizations; in other words the reality of the performance is in the performing…” (1977, pg. 122), is of central concern to the interpretation of the theatrical event. Bennett is concerned with the investigation of the cultural values of the audience and how they inform the ‘politically implicated act’ of the production of a theatrical event (1997, pg. 86). In her chapter The Audience and the theatre: Culture and the Theatrical event, Bennett analyses the reception of the audience in relation to theatre institutions producing the event, and their cultural products. Her research explores the implications of class, gender and race in programming in mainstream institutions with the production of conventional theater, and it also examines the reception of non-traditional forms of theatre. Bennett explores the reception of performance/s, in the surveys and in-depth interviews cited which all examine the effect of the actual performance, albeit closely investigating the surrounding socio-cultural and political contexts of the spectators. Her vast research also focuses on the production of theatre as a cultural commodity and the conditions within which it is produced, and received.
Dutch theorists Schoenmaker and Tulloch (2004) argue that reception research does not often take into account the specifics of the theatrical event staged and this causes a disconnect between the responses recorded, the intention of the theater-makers and the hypotheses tested. Testing this discrepancy, Schoenmaker, Derks and Kolkema, (1989) found that by including an analysis of the specifics of the theatrical event with the characteristics of spectators, contradictions in research data do disappear. They assert that reception theory requires an engagement with multiple aspects of any one performance including engagement with character and spectator, skills and spectator, attractiveness of a character, spectacle and spectator to mention a few. Initially two of these approaches appeared relevant to my dissertation. The first, identified as the “feeling of similarity between a spectator, a character, based on age, gender, but also on quite different variables such as personality, world-view etc….” (Schoenmaker and Tulloch, 2004, p. 19), and the second was analyzing the characteristics of the theatrical event and the response by spectators.

The most relevant aspect of Bennett’s reception theory for this dissertation is her discussion of the specific encounter the spectator has with the space in which the theatrical event is staged. Bennett, applying Schechner, discusses how the expectation of, and preparation for the event-purchasing of a ticket, dressing, transport to venue, waiting in a queue etc. - ‘sets the scene’ for the reception of an event, and is in effect akin to an actor’s preparation, the preparation of actor and spectator constitute the theatrical frame (Schechner, 1997, pg. 122). This combined with the site of the Fringe established that the frame at the tent is one that interacts with otherness spatially, socially, aesthetically and in the genre of performance employed. The influence of spectator expectation and Fringe performance is explored further in relation to the communicative frame created by marketing the event in chapter four. Bennett assert that the ‘milieu’ surrounding a theatre “…is always ideologically encoded and the presence of the theatre can be measured as typical or incongruous within it. That relationship further shapes the spectator experience” (pg. 126). ‘The Famous’ is situated in Fringe, often at the Fringe, in park or at the edge of a large mainstream cultural institution, its ‘otherness’ encoded in its emplacement signals to those attending they are associating with something
literally situated ‘at the edge’, to see a performance that is viewed as ‘alternative’ Fringe and ‘cutting-edge’. Paradoxically the form of the performance is a subversion of mainstream genres, as discussed later in chapter four in relation to new burlesque and new circus. “The site of performance is patently important.” argues Bennett; it lures a certain kind of audience and to promise a certain kind of theatrical experience (pg. 127).

The façade of the tent featured a rendition of fin de siècle mural evoking the Parisian Salons that featured burlesque shows in Paris. The interior as discussed, invites nostalgia and romance with its mirrored walls, and art-deco features (as described in the introduction). The Spiegel Garden reflects an important development in the theorization of theatre architecture with saw an investigation into the value of the ‘foyer’ in nineteenth century theatres. Bennett cites a study by Hays (1981, in Bennett, 1997, pg. 130), whereby the expansion of the size of foyers foregrounds the relationship between spectators of ‘seeing’ and ‘being seen’. The spectators in Charles Garnier’s study (1871 cited by Hays, 1981, pg., 5), “is at leisure to study the characteristics of other members of the audience, to note dress and jewelry, but to above all observe a sense being observed”. This sense of ‘being seen’ is intrinsic to the experience of Fringe as discussed earlier, which is also affected by the opportunity to mix with the performers after the show, often who come outside the tent into the garden to relax and drink. This fosters the club like atmosphere and interestingly Bennett asserts, “is an effective tool to increase the audience’s familiarity with the political, and/or artistic aims of the company” (1997, pg.131).

Another aspect of the shaping of spectator expectations in the space is “informal proxemic mode” (Bennett, 1997, pg. 135) – the distance between the stage, the performers and the spectators and the spectators and each other, often disrupted in non-traditional theatres. David Bates (the tent owner) refers to this in the documentary as, “…the intimacy of the space” (Appendix). Bates also emphasizes that the circularity of the space around the tiny thrust stage means that the spectator’s can watch each other’s reactions, and these, along with the performance onstage are also reflected in the mirrors surrounding them. At every turn at ‘The Famous’ spectators are able to see different iterations of their own and each other’s experience
of the performance, reflecting Bauman’s notion of double consciousness (1989).

Bennett also discusses the practice of using actors fulfilling non-performing roles to usher spectators to their seats, serve drinks etc. She discusses this a process, which can alert spectators to the divide between the actors off, and onstage, or as another technique whereby the actor is in character in the auditorium, which activates the performance before the show starts. Bennett asserts that this practice can create a collective atmosphere and to break the stage-auditorium barrier in conventional theatres. At ‘The Famous’ a collective atmosphere is achieved using these techniques (1997, pg. 135). Some characters from La Clique such as the sword-swallower, Miss Behave, adopt this style of character based interaction as a kind of ‘audience warm-up’; she talks to people in the queue, dances with them after the show, and sometimes gets them to buy her drink during the show as part of her act. Bennett’s analysis does not examine the reciprocal relationship of the spectator and performer in the auditorium, foyer in the realm of the outer frame or inner frame of the audience experience in the offstage realm. Therefore I need to depart from Reception theory.

Foucault’s third-space: The double-logic of the mirror

If the Fringe festival is a site that celebrates otherness, and spectators are seeking encounters with difference through play, then it follows that ‘The Famous’ may be conceived as an-other space, suggestive of Foucault’s heterotopia. As outlined briefly in Chapter One, Foucault identifies two types of space that challenge the hegemony of dominant social and political institutions- utopian and heterotopian space. Utopias represent ‘no place’, and offer an idealized version of a particular society, a perfected version turned upside down (Hetherington, 2002). Utopias sit in contrast to heterotopian space, which encompass real and unreal places, simultaneously representing, contesting and inverting real sites with imagined or unreal
space (Foucault, 1967). Latin for “space of otherness” Foucault partially
developed the concept of heterotopia which has now been applied across
multiple spheres as a spatial concept. Originally it came from the study of
anatomy and refers to “parts of the body that are either missing, out of place
or, like tumours, alien” (Hetherington, 2002, p. 3). Heterotopias operate as
‘counter-sites’, and as Hetherington argues, are spaces that challenge the
way we think or the way our thinking is ordered. Tompkins argues that
theatre is a kind of heterotopia, that can operate as a strategy through which
to productively engage with audiences and public space by creating
alternative space through which culture can be recognised (Tompkins, 2012,
p. 105). Tompkins draws on Hetherington’s interpretation of heterotopias as
spaces that offer ‘alternate ordering’ of the world and operate as spaces
between the “not-real” spaces. Hetherington reinterprets Foucault’s
heterotopias as spaces of resistance, suggesting instead that they are places
that offer alternative ways to interpret social organization in relation to other
everyday spaces. They are imagined spaces that operate in relation to a real
space, much like a theatre space (Tompkins, p. 106). I am using the concept
of heterotopia as way to help articulate the role of performance and its
potential use as a tool to create temporary communities through shared
experience of otherness. ‘The Famous’ exemplifies heterotopian space in a
number of ways. Foucault’s heterotopias undergo transformations over a
period of time; their relationships to the spaces around them morph and
change. They are spaces that are both apart and part of the mainstream, are
often situated on borders and edges of urban environments, and include
parks, cemeteries, graveyards, prisons, and resorts (Foucault, 1967, p. 17).
Foucault doesn’t clarify the difference between terms such as “place”,

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“space”, and “site” and “location”. I differentiate the various terms used to describe space in the following manner; a “site” is the physical location of the building; a “place” is both the physical and non-physical landscape, (including the symbolic landscape of the psyche as articulated by Gaston Bachelard (1994)), and “location” is used symbolically to situate meaning in the context of a body in performance at a “site”.

By my interpretation David Bates is the custodian of “…an existing heterotopia, which has never vanished...” (Mitchell, 1999, p. 300), that traverses multiple locations and sites, and yet the building maintains what Jacques Derrida would term its “eventmental dimension” (Kipnis & Leeser, 1997). Derrida argues that architecture is an event, proposing that a building is more of happening than a thing. That after construction it continues to re-create, to persist in becoming in relation to “the imminence of that which happens now” (Derrida cited in Casey, 1998, pg 313). The ‘eventmental dimension’ of ‘The Famous’ travels with it from festival to festival, and is continually re-constructed and re-presented by the performers as an a-historical place from an-other time. It is consumed as an ‘other’ space in which to be entertained by ‘others’ and to entertain being an-other. The other space that reflects and contains the performance of otherness at ‘The Famous’ is the mirrors that line its interior. Foucault identifies the mirror as an example of heterotopia, referring to it as the

5 Chora L. Works is a collection of documents, transcripts, and essays detailing the unique collaboration between Derrida and architects Peter Eisenman and Bernard Tschumi for the design of a “garden” in the Parc de Villette in Paris. This edited compilation forms a dialogue on the aesthetics of space.
third-space’ of heterotopia. The space inside the mirror reflects a place that represents an-other ‘otherness’. The performative interaction between the spectator and performer ‘plays’ out in the virtual non-place of the mirror. In the liminal space of the mirror, between the real and the unreal the participants transgress metaphorically to a ‘new’ space that embodies the liminoid experience of blurring role between performing and spectating. Simultaneously it reflects the experience of communitas. Communitas is when participants playfully engage in structured and anti-structured interactions. These interactions create a shared experience of other facilitated by the adoption of ritualised approaches to performative interaction. Examples of such interactions in popular entertainments include the embodiment of performative gestures such as dancing, applauding and the adoption of costume. What is the effect? Does the viewing of self in the mirror enable the viewer to recognize their limits? Applying Foucault the reconstitution or transformation of self is a key aspect of transgression and of my analysis.

The liminoid moment arises as the boundary between spectating and performing is opened or transgressed, when spectators partially adopt the role of performer and the performer becomes a partial spectator. Reading this role shift as transgressing or opening up a boundary toward otherness suggests that an-other performance space is created. This parallel universe of otherness is captured in the mirrors lining the tent. The virtual space illuminates the cultural boundaries of self and other in the un-real space of the mirror. The mirror reflects the temporary transformation of self that is not part of the structural frame of performative interaction, but sits alongside it. Everything captured resembles the real, but it is in fact a
liminal space that sits betwixt and between the everyday and heterotopian. The transgression from one role to another embodies the otherness sought by participants through engagement in the immersive space of cultural performance. The construction of the experience is framed by the identities of the circus–folk who signify other. For the postmodern consumer this encounter with otherness, spatially and performatively creates *communitas* or shared experience.

I chose to use the circling image of the mirrors lining the tent in my research documentary as the aesthetic logic to illustrate viewing and reviewing the experience of performance to find meaning. As the beams of theatrical lighting hit the beveled edges the mirrors refract, I imagined this refraction of light to represent the complexity of the spectator/performer experience, splitting into a fissure for the transgression toward otherness to occur. For this reason, I chose to make the mirrors a central motif in the research documentary, for even though the blurring of role reflected by the heterotopia in the mirror is “opaque and contradictory”, it captures the “necessity for society to create thrilling spaces that instill imagination as an escape from the real” (Dehaene & De Cauter, 2008, p. 93). The mirrors reflect the liminoid experience of participants by reflecting the limits crossed. The mirrors also frame the temporary blurring of role between performing and spectating that occurs. The mirrors witness the performer take on the partial role of spectator, watching the spectators perform and vice versa, they reflect an-other performance unconsciously taking place. The mirrors reflect the contradictory nature of the performative interactions as they occur for the limit is always shifting. As the limit shifts, boundaries blur, roles transform and the transgression toward otherness continues to
open. The ‘double-logic’ of the mirror as argued by Foucault suggests that the space in the mirror and the person in the mirror is both there and not there, and in the ‘non-place’ of the mirror the space of performance is reflected and contested (Foucault, 1967). In this context the double logic of the mirror reflects and houses performances of otherness and is an-other space. The mirrors reflect reality and also demonstrate that the separation between performing and spectating is an illusion. The aesthetic presence of the mirrors, are crucial to the eventmental dimension experienced by participants. The mirrors contribute to what interviewees described as the ‘magic’ atmosphere experienced at ‘The Famous’ (Appendix 2). I argue that the magic is the subversion of role enacted through partial performances of otherness reflected in the beauty of the mirrored surroundings. The space inside the mirror reflects the inversion of role between performers and spectators, recognising and reflecting the transgression toward otherness as it occurs. Identifying ‘The Famous’ as an example of disruptive, festive space and as an example of heterotopia, signposts the importance of the spatial when attempting to analyse popular entertainments and the surrounding contexts. Clearly articulating the links to carnival, Fringe space, and to the ‘meaning-flow’ co-constructed between performers and spectators also lays the foundations for my analysis later in Chapters Five and Six.

This chapter sought to explain why popular entertainments are variously described as slippery, porous, and blurry by reviewing existing literature in the field. I now turn to a discussion of the specific forms of popular entertainments that have influenced La Clique these are: American vaudeville, cabaret, circus, and burlesque. In doing this I am creating a
continuum of performance for *La Clique* and ‘The Famous’, to further investigate why these forms have the potential to offer an experience of transgression for those who encounter them at the contemporary Fringe festival.
In the following two chapters I examine the historical, social and cultural context of four distinct, yet similar genres of performance that fall within the category of popular entertainments (McNamara, 1974, p. 141); American vaudeville 1900-1930s, European cabaret and burlesque 1880s-1920s, and new circus 1980s-present day. I discuss the history of transgression associated with each genre focusing on space, spectatorship and the lifestyle of the performers. I have grouped this discussion in the following way to clearly identify which aspects of these performance genres relate to the performative history at ‘The Famous’, and to analyse how these past traditions have been reconstructed in the performances on and offstage in the environment of the Fringe festival.

Chapter Three comprises two parts and examines the relationship between vaudeville and burlesque entertainments and transgression. The history of American vaudeville and the reframing of theatrical spaces to attract a broader audience to low acts that originated in the travelling carnival is the focus of the first section. The second section briefly introduces the history of traditional burlesque at the turn of the 19th century, and the emergence of new burlesque in the latter part of the 20th century until the present. I examine the spectator/performer dynamics, specifically analyzing the formation of new burlesque performative communities. In Chapter Four, also in two parts, I explore the genres of traditional and contemporary alternative cabaret and new circus. My analysis of cabaret focuses on its origins as political performance in the Fringe spaces of fin de siecle Paris and tracks its evolution to the disruptive space of contemporary
alternative cabaret. Drawing on Goffman’s concept of frame I analyse the conventions of cabaret and how it uses performance to blur roles between performing and spectating. Following this I examine the relationship between new circus, spectacle and transgression. Traditional circus has a history connected to spectacle and this is introduced alongside an investigation into the genre of new circus. New circus blends physical theatre with aerial performance and features prominently in La Clique at ‘The Famous’. My analysis examines the spectacle in new circus performance and the role it plays in blurring concepts of performing and spectating.

Popular entertainments have a rich history connected to the concept of transgression. American vaudeville, cabaret, burlesque, and more recently new circus and new burlesque introduced approaches to performance that transgressed social norms in relation to race, gender, and social class. I investigate the effect the transgression of social norms had for the spectator, comparing transgression in the context of early 20th century performance to my experience of La Clique at ‘The Famous’. The purpose of this is to create my own pathway to examine how these forms collapse into one another to create the intertextual circus/cabaret experience at ‘The Famous’. There is minimal literature examining the spectator/performer dynamics and popular entertainments within the broader landscape of Australian cultural performance, and interrogating existing literature to create a continuum of performance on which to locate La Clique at ‘The Famous’ is the method through which I am addressing this gap.
American vaudeville: Legitimising carnival

I turn now to an historical consideration of the origins of American vaudeville, a socially transgressive form of entertainment that attracted mass audiences by transforming its connection to low art forms found in the travelling carnival, to ‘legitimate’ entertainment for ‘respectable’ audiences. First I examine the social context in which these forms existed, providing an overview of their structure and form combined with a discussion of the spaces in which they were staged.

Between 1820 and 1920 the United States experienced a new ‘cultural phenomenon’; the advent of ‘leisure time’ created by industrialisation and the rise of a new class of working people with disposable incomes (Somers, 1971). By the early 1900s in the sphere of entertainment the influx of European immigrants saw the explosion of an industry that came to dominate the leisure time of all classes across the East and West Coasts - vaudeville entertainment. The structure and form of American vaudeville was influenced by traditional circus and music hall, and is a popular topic amongst theatre historians, who have provided extensive reviews and critique of its social and cultural impact. In particular, discussion of vaudeville’s success in transgressing distinctions between classes, race, and gender onstage.

The word vaudeville originates from 15th-century France where a series of songs titled Vaux- de-Vire were penned by Olivier Basselin in the Valley of Vire in Normandy. The songs remained popular for two hundred years and they became known as the vox de ville or ‘songs of the town’, the word then evolved to vaudeville meaning ballad or light comedy (Snyder, 1989, p. xiv). American vaudeville can be traced to British music
hall, minstrel shows and variety. Robert Snyder (1989) argues that the Americans chose to differentiate themselves from the British by adopting the French term vaudeville instead of variety. I have chosen to focus on American vaudeville for it is the form cited by the performers and producers associated with *La Clique* at ‘The Famous’ as one which influenced the structure and style of the format alongside other influences traceable to European cabaret, burlesque and circus. Snyder (1989), Anthony Slide (1994), and Arthur Wertheim (2006) amongst others have written comprehensive historiographies of American vaudeville. All document its origins in musical performances in the back rooms of saloon bars, and even earlier in the ‘Coochie Tents’ at the circus and carnival sideshows and Dime Museums, (lowbrow environments designed for men only). In –depth research drawn from archival sources; newspapers, theatre bills, biographies of the impresarios who dominated the market, and oral histories drawn from the vaudevillians provide comprehensive insight into the genre and celebrate its form, content and significance culturally within a specific time frame.

Critical analysis of vaudeville investigates its socially radical presentations of multi-racial acts, and performances by women, at a time when the only place for these artists to perform publicly was on the vaudeville stage. There is an abundance of material that discusses the success of specific acts, the evolution of the ‘star’ system, and of the so-called ‘vaudeville wars’ waged between impresarios on the East and West Coast. These entrepreneurs competed for dominance in the touring market through the ownership of venues and monopolisation of vaudeville acts. This section touches lightly on these historical aspects of the genre’s
evolution for it is well documented in existing literature. My focus is on the interaction between spectators, performers, and performance space.

American vaudeville had a significant impact on the development of not only where entertainment was seen, but also who was seeing it. The historical literature highlights aspects that distinguished vaudeville from the ‘legitimate’ theatre, and describes the vaudeville stage as a ‘levelling’ environment for performers and spectators (Slide, 1994). When patrons visited one of these houses to be entertained they were stepping into a multi-racial, world that did not adhere to the same kinds of social rules that existed offstage; Blacks, whites, Jews and Poles would perform alongside men dressed as women, and women, although notably black patrons were still segregated if allowed to view the vaudeville at all. Slide argues that the stage was a place where discrimination was reduced and the performers capitalized on this sense of freedom, “…performers could and did say just about anything, and in any guise they wished…” (1994, p. x). This is a clear example of the way in which the construction of other spaces by vaudevillian entrepreneurs frames an experience of difference for spectators. These other spaces commodified cultural difference, legitimatising its consumption through the transformation of the spatial environment into ‘acceptable’ spaces that adhered to middle-class ideas of respectability. Simultaneously the radical representations of cultural difference on offer paradoxically contests and inverts the ‘legitimacy’ of the site. M. Alison Kibler notes vaudeville’s success in drawing “…high and low together on stage and in the audience, uniting the fractured cultures (male and female audiences, art and museums) in its theatres” (Kibler, 1999, p. 8). Kibler further suggests that it managed to “…erode the local orientation of
nineteenth century audiences, and knit them, despite their diversity, into a modern audience of national proportions” (Kibler, 1999, p. 24). Prior to the rise of vaudeville U.S citizens from the middle-classes rejected the itinerant performers associated with travelling carnivals and traditional circus considering them ‘outsiders’ with a lack of “…religious, ethical, and social values and kept them at a social distance” (Snyder, 1989, p. 44). Harpo Marx acknowledged in his experience of touring the Midwest at this time, that the view of people of the stage was synonymous with ‘gypsies’ and ‘vagrants’ who represented a threat with their Jewishness and New York accents (Marx & Barber, 1985, p. 98). Attitudes to ethnicity and gender evolved in the States during this period, and this cultural transformation was partly facilitated by the theatrical entrepreneurs who built new theatres and created a vast touring circuit across the country. Initially the vaudevillians “…challenged and subverted the genteel Victorianism of middle-class native born Americans” (Snyder, 1989, p. 43), and to combat this perception the entrepreneurs initiated two approaches that would change the perception of their potential new audiences. They transformed the spaces in which the work was seen, and transformed the perception of the content. They did this by successfully appropriating the language of main stage respectable theatre practice to describe the buildings and the performances. They adopted the term ‘legitimate’ theatre to attract middle-class and upper-middle class patrons to a ‘civilised’ environment. They advertised entertainment that laid claim to literary or high performance to distance vaudeville from its association with the traditions of circus and carnival. The presentation of content that mimicked the dramatic monologues that until then only appeared on the traditional stage, helped transform the perception that
conventional stage plays no longer monopolized the definition of legitimate theatrical entertainment (Mintz, 1996).

Theatre historian Mark Hodin argues that the entrepreneurs who used the term ‘legitimate’ were responsible for creating vaudeville, subsequently recognised by the newspapers as a genre in its own right in 1895, when the New York Dramatic Mirror added a new department to its weekly coverage of theatre: “The Vaudeville Stage”, because vaudeville was “steadily coming into nearer relations with the regular stage” (Hodin, 2000, p. 211). This significant cultural shift acknowledged that literary theatre was no longer the only form of ‘theatre’ that middle-class patrons could or should attend (Napier, 1986). Importantly, the ‘legitimising’ of the form appears in most cases to be in name only, as vaudeville continued to transgress social conventions. By reframing the spaces in which vaudeville was presented to attract a more affluent audience, the vaudevillian impresarios successfully transgressed its low class affiliation. Following this, I argue that the transformation of performance spaces has the potential to affect the spectator experience of performance beyond what is presented onstage to contribute to a shift in perception of what is culturally and socially acceptable.

Two men are credited with the growth of Vaudeville on the East Coast as a form of mass entertainment, B.K. Keith from Boston and his associate E.F. Albee. Keith began his career in show business with P.T. Barnum’s circus billed as “The Greatest Show on Earth”. Performing all manner of jobs; candy machine operator, minor management tasks, medicine show caller, Keith referred to his time in the circus as a ‘practical education’, and importantly it was here that he learned how to sell ideas to audiences.
Wertheim’s extensive archival survey of the history of the Keith and Albee partnership constructs an image of Keith, as a canny businessman astutely skilled in reading what audiences would buy. The circus taught Keith how to assimilate the chief features of commercial entertainment for significant financial return; the formula he created combined family entertainment with multi-act structure and fast-paced delivery. Keith employed E.F Albee, (who would become his long-term associate, in 1857), to replace him as a ‘shouter’ to attract crowds to the sideshows. Like Keith, Albee also displayed a skill for selling and credits his ‘education’ with the circus as key to his understanding of how to create family friendly entertainment for mass audiences,

In my opinion the advantages gained which fit a man for later years in business cannot be found in any other calling; the diverse experience which one encounters in travelling with a circus- the novelty, the contact with all classes, the knowledge of the condition of the country, its finances, its industry, its farming (Erdman, 2007, p. 46)

The colourful historical perspectives about the origins of the entrepreneurial minds behind vaudeville perpetuate its identity as a cutthroat industry based on street smarts and survival (Wertheim, 2006). Similarly on the West Coast two tycoons, Morris Meyerfield and Martin Beck owned the Orpheum Circuit and rivaled Keith and Albee’s dominance of the business. Meyerfield and Morris dominated the market by suppressing rival venues, and building opulent theatres that competed with Keith’s. They also established an extensive touring circuit for hundreds of vaudevillians between 1885 and 1930 (McLean, 1965). Wertheim’s *Vaudeville Wars: How Keith-Albee and Orpheum Circuits controlled the Big-Time and its*
Performers provides detailed historical account of what he refers to as the ‘wars’ between these players in the business that became known as the “Big-time”.

Keith and Albee were considered conservative; insistent on what Albee called “the three C’s” and a motto that governed all of Keith’s theatres, “Cleanliness, comfort and courtesy” (McLean, 1965, p. 204). Upon opening a new venue in Providence, (a booming industrial town), Albee printed rules in the program to ensure the audience knew how to behave as an alternative to the saloon bar culture that dominated the streets. Notes on language, vulgarity, suitability for children and ladies, and gentlemanly conduct all in the name of providing a “safe” environment and “protecting the character of the establishment” were all part of the strategy (Wertheim, 2006, p. 30). There was to be “… no hats, smoking, whistling, stamping, spitting and yelling obscenities. They prohibited profanity, off-colour jokes and indecency on the stage (2006, p. 31). Structurally traditional circus and American vaudeville were not dissimilar and vaudeville drew heavily on circus for its structure and mode of delivery (Mishler, 1994). In vaudeville the non-narrative shows, were connected by acts such as “The Lecturer” who would orate about a topic such as the wondrous nature of the round earth in between ‘turns’ (a vaudevillian word for act), that combined acrobatics, slapstick, monologue, dumb-shows, comic sketch and operettas, evidence that the strong link to circus remained relatively unchanged. The acts were designed to entertain and thrill using a combination of spectacle and high skill to attract and impress crowds (Schechter, 2003). The use of spectacle was as important in vaudeville and circus as the literary text used in the black box theatres they came to emulate, because as Mayer explains,
“…movement, sound, pageantry, visual symbols, and spectacular technical affects were the primary focus of these performances” (Mayer & Richards, 1977, p. 276).

American vaudeville paved the way for what is now referred to as New Variety in contemporary popular entertainment. Variety theatre however, originated just prior to the boom of vaudeville, and is arguably the European equivalent. It is virtually identical in structure and form, and was also borne from the world of cheap mass amusements like the travelling carnival. In particular the German variety theatres flourished in the late 1800s and by 1900 also managed to establish themselves as spaces of bourgeois sociability (Otte, 2006, p. 135). In Germany, next to circus, the variety theatres became the main form of affordable entertainment, as Otte observes, “…just as circuses had become temples of amusement unmatched in splendour and elegance, variety theatres strove to provide their audiences with an atmosphere of wealth and leisure” (2006, p. 135). Twentieth century popular entertainments became increasingly reliant on mass audiences and unlike circus which:

…Encouraged the myth of its long history dating back to antiquity, variety entertainment presented itself as modern form of live entertainment. Along with the department stores and warehouses mushrooming in every major German city, variety theatres became potent symbols of the modern urban experience (p. 136).

The trajectory of vaudeville and German variety is almost identical and indicates how the spatial frame of a performance can transform its popularity and more broadly its social impact. Intellectuals in the interwar period tended toward disdain of the popular and mass consumerism in Europe and America and yet paradoxically the educated middle class still
actively consumed the very forms of culture they denounced (Otte, 2006).

For the performers it was extremely difficult to adhere to a normal life when the nature of the existence of the variety family involved constant travel from show to show, and town to town. This meant that the perception of the performers as the feared outsider or stranger endured (Simmel, 1971). What audiences accepted onstage contradicted the dominant societal structure and interactions in everyday life. Onstage otherness was exoticised and paradoxically offstage viewed as destabilising. The lifestyle of the travelling entertainers challenged conventional perceptions of normality, as did the performances, yet within the bounded, designated space for the ‘other’, the theatre, the performance of difference could be accepted.

Variety theatres continue to operate in Germany and play in static spiegeltents all year round, following a traditional dinner and show format akin to modern American cabaret. ‘New variety/vaudeville’, (the term producer Brett Haylock uses to describe La Clique), has gained currency in recent years as the genre resurfaces, this time with strong links to European cabaret. The contemporary incarnations emulate the conventions of vaudeville and variety theatre, yet significantly the class distinctions that united and divided the heteroglossic audiences in the early 1900s no longer dominate cultural critique. Therefore, social satire and the performance of difference in La Clique are inherent rather than explicit. My research argues that the contemporary incarnation of variety/vaudeville by performers in La Clique at ‘The Famous’ attempts to retrieve the subversive qualities embodied by the vaudevillian/variety artists of the earlier era.

In conclusion the essence of vaudeville for my research is its connection to the low culture of carnival. By creating distance between the
spatial environment of the carnival and maintaining links to its content, vaudeville bridged a social divide between audiences. The subversion of societal norms occurred through the re-framing of the content, re-presenting it within a more palatable environment for the moneyed class. This strategy was extremely successful and the result was, that the re-packaging of otherness increased the value of consuming otherness. Vaudevillian entrepreneurs used the otherness of its performers to legitmise the desire for difference by changing the spectator’s perception of what they were consuming. This directly informs my investigation into the spatial and performative dynamics between spectators and performers at ‘The Famous’. By reframing the environment concepts of transgression are therefore extended off stage. This insight enabled me to further explore how the environment at ‘The Famous’ is framed and how the spatial and performative framing affects the spectator/performer dynamic both on and off stage.

The genre of burlesque, a sub-genre of vaudeville/variety and cabaret has reappeared over the past fifteen years, and in the following section I discuss its significance as a form that radically disrupted audience expectations in relation to gender and power in the late 19th and early 20th century and during the 1920s. The analysis of the staging of genre in *La Clique* infers that new burlesque continues to destabilise notions of femininity. New burlesque is an exemplar of performative sub-culture and the transgression of roles between performing and spectating occurs symbolically and literally. Participants dress up to celebrate ideas of femininity linked to the rise of the *fin de siècle* burlesque identity: Outspoken, ironic, and provocative (Buszek, 1999). The dressing up enacted
by spectators is performative, a display of otherness within a tribe that marks identity, and also signals belonging. I suggest that new burlesque is an example of the desire of the postmodern consumer to find a tribe through which to share meaningful experience using performance, as an ‘other’ state where value and meaning derive from ritual (Levi-Strauss, Weightman, Weightman, & Wilcken, 2012).

**Burlesque: Boom or bust**

In the late 19th century burlesque performances featured in vaudeville and cabaret and also ran as stand-alone shows that played in theatres. Originally, burlesque performances took place in theatres, not strip clubs, and combined elaborate costumes and sets together with spoken dialogue or comic routines, often performed by the striptease artists themselves (Ferreday, 2008; Shteir, 2004). Following this, burlesque experienced a boom in London and New York City at the turn of the 20th century, and later as a draw card for the late-night vaudeville repertoire of the 1900-1930s. Regardless of its origins in vaudeville, travelling carnival or theatre, the cultural phenomenon of burlesque that thrived throughout the 1860/70s came during great social upheaval. Feminist analysis of burlesque during this period discusses the dominance of the presentation of “sexualised female spectacle” that transgressed societal norms (Pittenger, 2004, p.2).

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6 That burlesque performances originated in theatres is contested by vaudevillian references that suggest that burlesque can be traced to the saloon bars and ‘Coochie Tents’ of the carnival and sideshow that originated in the late nineteenth century.
Debates prevalent during the *fin de siècle* raged around alcohol, debt, and depression, and these issues affected gender roles and class. Burlesque used its celebration of ‘excessive femininity’ in these times to challenge traditional feminine roles (Davis, 2002). Debra Ferreday draws on Maria-Elena Buszek who observed that burlesque performers of the late 19th century “…negotiated a rare spectrum of gray areas between the period’s societal binary for women” (Buszek, 1999, p. 141; Ferreday, 2008). The identity of middle class white women in Victorian era as articulated by Buszek, “…generally consisted of two poles of existence: the idealized domestic ‘true woman’ or the vilified prostitute” (Buszek, 1999, p. 141). Buszek argues that women onstage in the theatre disrupted this binary and became symbols of self-sufficiency and independence that in turn threatened the status quo. According to Tracey Davis, the actress embodied middle class values such as hard work, education and culture and, “…unlike prostitutes were regarded as “proper” vessels of physical and sexual beauty and legitimately moved in society as attractive and desirable beings” (2002, p. 69). Buszek also argues that burlesque performer’s power came from embodiment “…as alternative, unstable, and powerful roles for white women – transgressive identities that were celebrated and made visible in the theatre” (Buszek, 1999, pp. 141-142). The binary for women between the bourgeois “true woman” and low class prostitute is evidenced by the roles these performers played in transgressing what Buszek refers to as the ‘grey areas’ of feminine identity at this time. Ferreday argues that vaudeville made actresses visible and powerful alternative identities transgressing traditional roles. Buszek (1999) notes that the image of the powerful destabilized feminine identity originated during this period, in the
form of photographic “pin-ups”. These ‘pin-ups’ promoted theatrical identities and contributed to the creation of the ‘star system’. Buszek argues that burlesque performers manipulated and used the concept of the sexualized female to great effect by moving beyond the bounded space of the stage into the mass media. The rise of the visibility of women transgressed the societal positioning of women’s lives in the private sphere of the home and men’s lives in the public sphere of work and society.

In early burlesque shows in the 19th century later known as the burlesque ‘leg shows’, the performances were parodies based on textual romantic or historical fantasy dramas. The focus of the show was not the plot, but rather the scantily clad actresses or “chorus girls” and the actresses often used the texts as a vehicle through which to satirise high literary texts and social mores of the day (Allen, 1991). The evolution of the leg show offered women the opportunity to play male and female roles, write their own work, and perform as comedians, as well as utilising their physical appeal as way to attract audiences. This proved successful in France, Italy and England and the historical dramas evolved into a subversive representation of Victorian sensibilities which troubled women’s societal position and its relationship to these radical representations of women on stage (Allen, 1991). Pittenger profiles burlesque troupe, the *British Blondes* in 1861 in London who performed a combination of political commentary, parodies of plays, singing, and dancing in little clothing and this form evolved by the 1930s to become dominated by dances and occasional witty political repartee. As with other forms of variety entertainment burlesque transgressed its origins as a male-only lower class form of entertainment to find great success in bourgeois theatres. The popular interest in the leg show
as a legitimised form of entertainment for middle and upper class male and female audiences in the United States is credited to playwright and theatre manager Laura Keene. In the latter part of the 19th century in the saloon and burlesque halls the ‘performers’ were prostitutes and waitresses whose brief outfits were designed to ‘entertain’ the all –male clientele. The identity of the female performer at this time was therefore closely associated with the idea of the “public woman” or prostitute, and the same perception was held in Europe. Keene sought to elevate her ‘women’s plays’ as a viable and legitimate form of entertainment for theatre-goers, and like the vaudevillians she sought to address the issues of class and gender segregation. Her theatre, The Laura Keene was located in a respectable middle class district close to Broadway in New York, her plays dealt with women’s issues, and her personal involvement with charities also strengthened her reputation. The staging of her play ‘The Seven Sisters’ in 1860 is credited as the first production to “… bring feminised spectacles to a “legitimate” American theatrical space (Buszek, 1999, p. 146). Critics suggested it was not the play but the inclusion of the chorus of legs on display that cemented its popularity. Critics in America dismayed by the success of the feminised spectacle embodied by burlesque entertainment argued that the representations of women were immoral. The British Blondes further disrupted notions of femininity by lampooning classical literature and contemporary culture in their performances. Significantly their performances were also all female and they parodied the identity of the 19th century “true woman” in their shows whilst displaying their physicality in revealing costumes. Buszek astutely highlights the way in which Thompsons’s troupe blurred the lines between character and actress, and
performer and reality, analyzing the powerful effect this disruption of identity had socially. The sexual agency of the performer was actively promoted as of the phenomenon of the ‘star’ emerged and the identity of the “openly sexualised” ideal dominated the pin-up images of the burlesque identities (Buszek, 1999, p. 147). An identity that as Buszek explains, was acknowledged by Thompson, who referred to herself and her troupe as “…modern women very much aware of their “own awarishness” (1999, p.147). The unsettling aspect of the “awarishness” of the modern leg-show actress was not only their presence on stage, but also of the spectacle of this consciousness of self, of self-promotion outside the framework of the theatre. As Allen (1991) explains:

Without question, however, burlesque’s principal legacy as a cultural form was its establishment of patterns of gender representation that forever changed the role of the woman on the American stage and later influenced her role on the screen…. The very sight of a female body not covered by the accepted costume of bourgeois respectability forcefully if playfully called attention to the entire question of the "place" of woman in American society (pp. 258-259)

Buszek argues that the de-containment of sexualised feminine identity using burlesque performance at the turn of the 20th century is paralleled in the 21st century by the resurgence of ‘new burlesque’. Willson and Ferreday’s feminist critique of burlesque investigates the reasons for the resurgence of burlesque in the 1990s in London and New York. Briefly, Ferredays’ feminist critique of new burlesque addresses tensions between a constructed feminine identity as “narratives of excessive, dangerous femininity” that use parody and resistance to empower both the performers, and the subculture of spectators who participate in these performances
Willson’s critique positions the burlesque performer as a subversive figure with a long history of transgression. Her close examination of burlesque questions what its re-emergence reveals about the post-feminist condition specifically regarding performance, power and agency. Buszek and Willson’s analysis of feminine identity in this context provides a clear framework for the way in which the performance of identity or performativity is linked to transgression. Although my research does not explore the phenomena of performativity and sexuality from a feminist perspective, the key concepts associated with transgression such as; alternative, unstable, powerful and visible are examined in relationship to performative participation.

The construction and promotion of self has carried strongly into the current era of new burlesque performance. The burlesque image of the smart and sexy intellectual who confronts the audience using role distance to commentate on her own performance of outlandish, savvy, highly camp and spectacle is a hallmark of the success of the female acts in La Clique. In burlesque ‘speaking back’ challenges the spectator’s ‘perceived notions of sexual objectification’ (Willson, 2007, p. 18) and reframes it forcing the viewer to question their own role in participating in the titillating display of flesh combined with comedy. New burlesque features heavily in La Clique and represents transgression in relationship to the body and notions of femininity. Willson critiques the work of performance artist and feminist Ursula Martinez7, who subverts power, sexuality and agency with her

7 Martinez is one of the star acts in La Clique involved from its inception in 2004 until 2011.
comic striptease and sleight of hand act. Willson, like Mason (1997), acknowledges the subversive and unexpected impact of direct address in popular entertainments. Martinez, (like many burlesque artists), ‘speaks’ to the audience, sometimes using words and sometimes using comedic gesture and facial expressions. Willson argues, that burlesque has a ‘sting’ in it, it is parodic and tongue-in-cheek and its irony laden style uses theatricalised sexuality with clear political intent to subvert hierarchical ideas regarding gender, form and skill (2007, p. 18). In burlesque the performer relies on the distancing as a way to collapse expectations, disarm and interact directly. Subverting the spectator’s expectations and inviting them to engage in a performance of their own to comment on the action of an act, momentarily blurs roles between the performer and spectator. This blurring of role using role distance is another spatial device. Transgression occurs when the space between performing and spectating is collapsed. The spectators ‘performance’ is an important component of the act, for in the moment of interaction the performer and the spectator simultaneously occupy a liminoid space. This liminoid space is an-other space through which spectators and performers interact with each ‘other’. Role distance is one of the techniques burlesque performers use to cue spectators to perform or ‘restore behaviour ‘in line with the conventions of burlesque performance. By alerting them that it is now time to ‘play’ within the frame, the spectators respond as the distance between performing and spectating is willingly and temporarily, disrupted by all participants.

The proliferation of new burlesque in America, United Kingdom and Australia is dominated by sexualised concepts of femininity and self-promotion, nostalgic homage to a bygone era, and to the construction of a
temporary identity that is mirrored by the spectators who attend the performances. Ferreday emphasises that “...one of the defining characteristics of new burlesque communities is nostalgia for original burlesque performances, as well as a reclaiming of historical burlesque performers as proto-feminist heroines” (Ferreday, 2008, p. 48). The spectators dress up for the shows, ‘reclaiming’ the pin-up burlesque stars from various era including Lydia Thompson (1860s), Gypsy Rose (1920s) and Dita von Teese (1990s). Parallels can be made between the Spiegel aesthetic and the aesthetic favoured by new burlesque devotees. In both groups spectators emulate the dress of the performers as a form of performative participation. One of the most significant differences between the fin de siècle burlesque and new burlesque is that the audiences are predominantly women. Some of these sub-cultures performatively embody notions of sexual agency and empowerment through display and representation of excessive femininity (Willson, 2007). The sub-culture of the vaudeville/new burlesque/cabaret performer at the tent has bled from the stage into the street to become fashionable in mainstream pop culture. Pop icons such as Brittney Spears launched an album, Circus in 2008, using a mélange of circus style imagery, and Christina Aguilera released the soundtrack to Burlesque: The Motion Picture in 2010 firmly locating the fashion of burlesque in the mainstream. Sadly in some instances the savvy, political and satirical aspect of new burlesque has retreated to be replaced by strip tease, the eroticised representation of feminine without the wit or subversion. In this sense some interpretations of new burlesque appear to merely ape a fleeting fashion rather than embody a subversive form of performance.
Despite this, the formation of new burlesque sub-culture poses what sociologist Dick Hebdige defines as “symbolic challenges to a symbolic order” (1979, pp. 91-92). Hebdige refers to sub-cultures that create a collective identity using public performance and display as “spectacular subcultures” (1979, p.92). What appear to be frivolous gestures concerned with appearance and aesthetics, are in fact deeply subversive acts whereby objects such as clothes, hairstyle, accessories and even everyday practices are examples of performativity represented as the construction of a ‘style’. This ‘style’ disrupts the "…authorized codes through which the social world is organised and experienced” (p. 92). Gluck elaborates on Hebdige’s analysis of the codes of behaviour embodied by subcultures explaining that, “…subcultural styles become reincorporated into mainstream culture in two different ways: they are either transformed into fashion or are redefined as deviant or exotic behavior” (Gluck, 2000, p. 366). The sub-culture of performers who travel with ‘The Famous’ reflect Hebdige’s “spectacular subcultures”: They are highly visual and socialise as a group in their host city performing their otherness offstage and simultaneously attracting potential spectators to the Fringe to sell tickets.

New burlesque fans drawn to La Clique at the ‘The Famous’ are also an example of postmodern consumer culture. According to Cova and Cova (Cova et al., 2012), the postmodern consumer is seeking a tribe with whom to share social experiences. These experiences are enacted using ritualised approaches to performance including wearing clothing indicative of the ‘tribe’, attending specific venues and the appropriation of certain tropes such as the ‘sexually empowered woman’ to create like-minded communities. An exploration of Cova and Cova’s (2012) concept of the
tribal consumer is detailed in Chapter Six alongside my assertion that the facilitation of these communities involves a transgression of role between performing and spectating and producing and consuming.

Another genre in which the spatial and performative environment is disrupted using role distance is European cabaret. In the next section I argue that cabaret is the artistic alternative to vaudeville as it relies on an atmosphere of exclusivity to attract clientele. This subversive form of performance is explored in the next chapter to deepen my analysis of why the blurring of genres such as vaudeville, burlesque and cabaret contribute to the experience of transgression and otherness at ‘The Famous’.
FOUR  CABARET AND CIRCUS: INTIMACY AND SPECTACLE COLLIDE AT ‘THE FAMOUS’

Aside from similarities in the show structure and featured acts, the distinguishing feature between vaudeville, variety and La Clique at ‘The Famous’ is the relationship between the clientele and the space. In contrast to vaudeville and traditional burlesque, the cabaret sought to remove separation between the classes in the audience, inviting an adult only clientele who were encouraged to participate in the action on stage by heckling with the performers. Political and socially radical cabaret spaces swept across Europe in the late 19th-century and interwar period, evolving into Weimar Cabaret and Dada performance during the intense social and political upheaval of in the interwar period in countries including France, Germany, Austria and Poland (Appignanesi, 1975). In this section I review some of the limited critical literature concerning the historical origins of cabaret, its social contexts and the social role it played as a place for bourgeois transgression. The evolution of alternative cabaret as a genre designed to facilitate a transgression toward otherness by framing improvisational interactions between performers and spectators are also discussed.

The evolution of cabaret has taken many guises, traversing spatial and temporal manifestations of performance, art and politics since the mid-17th century where the origin of the term evolved from Old French, literally translated as ‘wooden structure’. Prior to this, cabaret came from Middle Dutch via Old Picard, from camberet, meaning ‘little room’ and was used to describe saloons that featured informal entertainment by strolling players (Shepherd, 2003, p. 35).
By the mid-1800s the café, or bistro, emerged as an alternative to the larger and more commercially conservative café-concerts that despite being renowned for social commentary, presented limited scope for more challenging styles of cabaret performance. The modern cabaret tradition flourished on the Left Bank in the infamous Latin Quarter in the Montmartre district, renowned for its bohemian population of impoverished, artist, poets, writers, painters and musicians that existed on the Fringes of middle-class life. Freidman argues, cabaret was opposed to the late 19th century high art and kitsch and was born from kleinskunst or ‘small art’, rather than art created for mass consumption like vaudeville and circus. Paradoxically its content drew on popular entertainments including puppetry, song, mime, pantomime, shadow play, circus parody, street song (Friedman, 2006). The performative styles also included the cabaret song, operetta, opera, boulevard comedy, melodrama, bourgeois tragedy, and political anthem (Friedman, 2006). Friedman quotes historian Harry Segel who articulates the paradoxes that bound high and low together at the cabaret,

If cabarets were from the outset elitist virtually by definition, the art for which they became best known was anything but that. It aimed, above all, at ending the hegemony of art that was either elitist by virtue of patronage or audience, or bourgeois by virtue of its standards and conventions. (p. 320).

Appignanesi explains that French cabaret emerged from a literary group known as the ‘Hydropaths’, who met once a week to share work poems, manuscripts and monologues. Its atmosphere of confrontational, ‘messiness’ was what distinguished cabaret from its other roots in French music hall and American vaudeville. Historically cabaret used intimacy in
spatial presentation situating crowds close to the action, often with a thrust stage stretched amongst the audience who sit at small tables surrounding the performers. In stark contrast to vaudeville the work was not polished into legitimacy, rather “it was deliberately shabby, improvisational and courted spontaneity” (Friedman, 2006, p. 320).

A key figure in experimental cabaret was the Master of Ceremonies (Emcee), originally singers known as chansonniers - “ballad makers”. The chansonniers are described by Leslie as, “Peculiarly French, specifically Parisian” (Leslie, 1978, p. 57), who argues this idiosyncratic figure emerged in response to the location of the cabarets in Montmartre, on the Fringe of the city, just outside the administrative confines of Paris until 1790. The Latin Quarter district was already home to multiple taverns and wine providores eager to avoid the tariffs placed on liquor once through the city gates in Paris. These cheaper places to eat and be entertained attracted a mixed clientele; gypsies, smugglers, dancers, and entertainers, and by the turn of the century the area also attracted the bohemian set – writers, painters and poets as well as middle class couples slumming it on the left bank (Leslie, 1978). The blurring of class distinctions enabled spectators to transgress their social standing and socialise with ‘others’ outside their daily existence. The Emcee character worked without the safety net of a script or a prescribed programme. The songs were localised, confrontational and impromptu and the style of performance involved time stand-up comedy, irony, satire and nostalgia. The first Emcee of note in the modern cabaret was Rodolphe Salis, a Parisian chansonnier renowned for his provocative performances at his venue Le Chat Noir. This tiny bar opened in 1881, and was the home of the first politicised and socially satirical cabaret
Patrons could expect Salis to present verbal commentaries to shadow plays including improvised references to audience members and known Parisian identities. Aristide Bruant, a regular performer at Le Chat Noir opened Le Mirliton, in 1885 continuing the tradition of the café owner chansonnier, poet, writer and satirist. Bruant is immortalised in the work of artist Henri de Toulouse Lautrec and his work became notorious for its brutal depictions of the rural bohemia of Montmartre. “Bruant’s was the initial theatre of provocation and audience insult” (Appignanesi, 1975, p. 25). Friedman refers to an identity known as La Bordas as one of the originators of modern cabaret performance. In May 1871 at the Tuileries Palace, La Bordas performed a radical song in a cabaret hosted by the Commune of Paris who revolted against the French government and forced them to flee to Versailles. Notably the curation of a more alternative and arguably politically radical programme by Salis at Le Chat Noir was designed to disrupt the separation between audience and spectator that was reflected in the café-concerts and more overtly in later development in the music hall (Appignanesi, 1975, p. 25). Despite these different versions of the origin of the first cabaret performer and performance, certain structural elements remain and are emulated in contemporary alternative cabaret. French cabaret spread across Europe from the early 1900s finding renewed political purpose during the between war period in Germany, Poland, Austria and Sweden. Appignanesi’s (1975) historical overview of cabaret suggests that it was in Le Boeuf Sur and other cabaret venues in Paris that artists instigated the assimilation of jazz, Dadaist and Futurist performance into the world of the avant-garde that grew out of the cabaret and spread elsewhere (Friedman, 2008, p. 321).
During the Weimer Republic, prior to Nazism, marginalised social groups including homosexuals, transvestites, prostitutes, cross-dressers, black marketeers, sexologists, and courtesans’ populated Berlin. An influx of Eastern Europeans immigrants; Russians fleeing the revolution, Balkan conspirators, Jews escaping Ukrainian pogroms, Hungarians, Viennese and Polish added to the diversity. Berlin was the centre of urban artistic and multicultural life following armistice in 1919. This was reflected in the print news where some 120 publications were in circulation, and popular, highbrow left and right wing politics flourished. Theatres sprang up overnight and cabarets mushroomed, as cabaret thrived on the death of censorship that occurred at this time. Berlin became known for its political satire, eroticism, lyricism, anti-establishmentarianism and avant-garde style (Benedikt & Wellwarth, 1964). The belle époque cabaret influenced the German cabaret scene, which became a platform to agitate, propagate and lament the conservative politics of the day (Jelavich, 1996). These artists contributed to bridged the gap between high or elitist art and consumer entertainment for a mass market in marked in Western culture since the 1800s (Appignanesi, 1975). Part of the success of cabaret during these unstable times was its representation of local issues and the relationship that was structured between the spectators and the performers. Cabaret continued to function as a place for people to converge and share social concerns using performative methods designed to provoke rather than simply entertain as in vaudeville or circus. That cabaret strove to be illegitimate is in direct contrast to vaudeville’s use of ‘legitimacy’ to attract mass audiences and substantial commercial dividends. Modern cabaret was intent on remaining connected to art and politics, and never sought to
‘legitimize’ itself, its insistence on transgressing social conventions its distinguishing feature. The following section explores the relationship between the performer and spectator in the cabaret. It illustrates how the complex interaction between performing and spectating includes the potential for transgressive experience of otherness to occur via the blurring of role.

**The spectator/performer nexus in contemporary cabaret**

The Emcee character, the use of political song, parody, and interaction between the spectator and performer remain central to the spirit of alternative contemporary cabaret. Friedman links cabaret and theatre together to refine his contemporary definition of cabaret, he asks, “What is cabaret-theatre? It is: Presentational; Musical; Sexy; Popular; Inexpensive; Dangerous; Messy; Connected” (2006, p. 321). This definition is distinguishes cabaret-theatre from traditional theatre. The form itself is slippery and ambiguous and paradoxically reliant on connection. The technique of the cabaret performer relies on spontaneous and constructed interactions with the audience. The style of cabaret may draw on multiple genres, but the opening of the terrain between audience and performer through direct address and other forms of interaction is essential to its structure and success. The reliance on the idea of connection as an intrinsic part of the cabaret experience relies on the frame of play. The spectators agree to the ‘as if’ of the environment, which is organised to appear chaotic: The rules of play in cabaret rely on structured interaction to key them to participate. Either the performers or spectator can key the other to interact or this interaction relies on spontaneity. The collective agreement to play
within these rules is where connection takes place. All agree to commentate, heckle and in turn respond to moments of action that arise during a performance. The spontaneous interaction blurs the line between performing and spectating, collapsing the distance between the on and offstage ‘worlds’.

The producers of *La Clique* carefully construct an exclusive environment linked to European cabaret culture to attract spectators interested in an experience of bohemia, alternative performance and nostalgia. Mary Gluck argues that the stereotypical image of the carefree bohemian moves beyond aesthetics, and is in fact a symbolic identity that represented the first embodiment of, “The artist of modernity and the privileged interpreter of aesthetic truths in contemporary society” (Gluck, 2000, p. 97). Gluck’s assertion that the bohemian was an ‘interpreter of aesthetic truths’ draws from Murger who argued the ‘true’ bohemian was:

> a successful professional and artistic entrepreneur who had learned to create publicity for his products and to negotiate the cultural marketplace for his own advantage. (p. 97)

*La Clique* deliberately blurs genres, combining the mass appeal of vaudeville and burlesque with the spatial and artistic aesthetic of the modern cabaret salon. The performers in *La Clique*, (many of whom were first discovered performing street theatre for a living), capitalize on the transition they have made from the low arena of the street to the artistic arena of the arts festival. It is the opulent interior of ‘The Famous’ that re-frames the acts drawn from the ‘low’ performance space of the street, disappearing their links to the travelling carnival and expanding their spectator base. An
evocation of the transition made by the carnival acts that moved to the impressive vaudeville theatres in the U.S.

*La Clique* at ‘The Famous’ adopts a nostalgic relationship to Weimar and French cabaret alongside vaudevillian tropes. They refer to themselves as ‘carnies’. ‘Carnie’ is a colloquial term used by the carnival community. It was part of carnival cant used to differentiate or exclude outsiders from the inner world of carnival life. The new circus/cabaret community uses this jargon in homage to the old traditions of carnival and to demonstrate belonging within the reimagined contemporary subculture at ‘The Famous’, blurring the line between high and low notions of art, performance and history to create their own genre. The performers and spectators adopt a theatricalised style of vintage dress that incorporates a bohemian sensibility drawn from the cabaret era of 1920s Europe, and the traditional burlesque of the Belle Époque. The resulting aesthetic is a version of salon bohemia: The mixing of Depression era Trilby’s and waistcoats, (worn by both men and women), coupled with *fin-de-siècle* burlesque costuming including corsets, fishnets, can-can skirts and character shoes. These aspects of the culture of ‘The Famous’ are discussed in the research documentary, which are excerpts of the research interviews transformed into data (see Appendix and Appendix 2).

Another unique aspect of ‘The Famous’ is, that unlike most art nouveau, heritage venues it travels, *with* the performers. The show was designed for the space, and the space travels with the show. The Spiegeltent is akin to a Tardis – a time machine. I use this term as metaphor to suggest that the aesthetic and performative styles adopted at ‘The Famous’ temporarily transport the performers and spectators to an-other place in
time, where they experience an intimate play on otherness that they co-create. The aesthetic play is a simulacrum of the ‘past’ that blurs the conventions of cabaret, burlesque, circus and vaudeville, and the result is a continuous performance of nostalgia. I use the term Tardis to indicate that as it continually travels globe, ‘The Famous’ never changes, the location does, but its aesthetic remains. The performers continually interact with spectators in different locations and the community continues to grow. It represents a timeless mélange of popular entertainments re-framed in an intimate and interactive performance space. Foucault’s (1967) heterotopia of the mirror, a real and unreal space, one that is both there and ‘over there’ reflects the timeless quality of the experience of performers and spectators. In the third-space of the mirror, as discussed in Chapter Two, the experience of otherness is reflected back to participants as it is occurring. In this sense the mirror reflects the continual co-creation of experience as an event that is always in the process of becoming and therefore has an intrinsic timelessness.

Allan Greenberg likens cabaret to ‘event- based art’, whereby the artist seeks to stimulate what Hauser calls the basic meaning of art: the act of “opening people’s eyes” (Greenberg, 1988 p. 108, Hauser, 1982, p. 311). Greenberg argues that cabaret provides a vehicle to bridge the gap between artist and spectator. This connects to Derrida’s ‘event-mental’ dimension, whereby the essence of cabaret is found in the environment co-created

8 The continued use of words with the prefix trans such as transport, to describe the way ‘The Famous’ involves the movement from one state and place to another, further solidifies my case for transgression and performance at the tent.
between performer and spectator within the confines of a small space (Kipnis & Leeser, 1997). Greenberg explores ‘art as transaction’ suggesting that cabaret is the ideal form for an artist to “authentically transact directly with an audience by involving them in an event I call transgression” (Greenberg, 1988, p. 108). By disrupting the separation between performer and spectator, using the aforementioned concept of other space, cabaret asks the audience to reflect and acknowledge their own part in the performance. Alternative cabaret, “… activates the audience and attacks them, entertains but also makes them conscious they are seeing a performance, with all the things that can go wrong or differently…” (Svich, 2011, p.126). The framework of the cabaret for the artist is a “…forum for artistic and socio-political involvement with society” (Friedman, 2006, p. 324), and the content often deliberately provocative, continues to evolve in contemporary alternative cabaret. How does cabaret manage to connect with spectators despite its unpredictability or is it this unpredictability that fosters the connection? Friedman asserts that cabaret performance is above all “illegitimate”, marked by its humour, dissenting politics and the use of the powerful tools of parody and satire. For Friedman it is,

…half play, half concert, certainly personality-based, not a replacement for theatre, but an alternative, the way vaudeville provided an alternative for legitimate theatre and commedia for the court theatre. Cabaret is, above all, illegitimate

(Friedman, 2006, p. 319).

At ‘The Famous’, the subversive behaviour exhibited by the performers is no longer situated outside the dominant hegemony of middle-class sensibility as it was 150 years ago. It is now accepted behaviour within
the environment of the Fringe festival. The appeal of heading to ‘The Famous’ evokes the experience of ‘slumming it’ that the bourgeoisie sought in Paris. ‘Slumming’ refers to the area in the Latin Quarter where the cabarets were located on the border of the city, and to the class of people who performed at them. The middle-class bourgeois bohemian identity became synonymous with the cabaret, another example of high and low aspects of socio-cultural life merging through leisure and marked by the transgression of class distinctions. The difference between the bourgeoisie ‘slumming’ in Paris and the modern spectator visiting the tent is that the contemporary spectator appears to ‘dress up’ to go to the tent (adopting the previously mentioned ‘Spiegel aesthetic’ of vintage suits, waistcoats and corsets). This performative behaviour suggests a willingness to temporarily transform everyday identity as a way to meaningful connect with ‘others’ at the tent.

According to Cowan, contemporary or alternative cabaret facilitates a “cabaret consciousness” that is inherent rather than overtly politicized (Cowan, 2010, p. 50). The modern cabaret and the alternative cabaret/circus La Clique capitalise on ‘otherness’ and ‘illegitimacy’ in a parallel strategy that attracts spectators interested in aesthetic expressions of difference. Legitimacy and illegitimacy serve a commercial purpose in vaudeville and cabaret, and the apparent binary part of its appeal. Ultimately the marketability of each form is reliant on its framing (using historical and cultural conventions to attract and shape participant experience). The blurriness between cabaret, burlesque and vaudeville in La Clique at ‘The Famous evokes the ambiguous nature of the form that traditionally incorporated popular and artistic forms, (particularly in Germany with the
influence of the avant-garde); this ambiguity is its essence and its strength. It is also a reflection of current practice where postmodern pastiche underpins much of this style of reflexive performance. The performers in *La Clique* are aware of the play of difference that underpins their acts, and that they are inviting spectators to interact with difference, but they do not identify this play of difference as political, as argued by Cowan (2010). The collection of acts in *La Clique* have been reviewed by theatre critics as, “... sexy, underground circus-style, performers”, “a quirky, sexy cabaret of the ‘other...’” and a “...blend of dark cabaret, skewed burlesque and polished circus...” (Keenan, 2008, p. 11), emphasising the attraction to difference. Cowan (2010) asserts that what appears to be spontaneous and improvisatory in the contemporary cabaret arena is in fact carefully constructed to facilitate a complex interaction between performers and spectators. The interaction relies on the collapsing of distance between performing and spectating, initiated by both the performer and spectator. It is improvisational and spontaneous, but all participants expect this kind of *adhoc* interaction to occur as part of the convention of the genre. Cowan observes that the contemporary cabaret facilitates a “particular social-cultural–political formation and consciousness, a *cabaret consciousness*” (authors italics), (Cowan, 2010, p. 50). In using the term political to describe the style of cabaret performance, Cowan is referring to the transformational principles associated with “activist/social justice improvisational performance” (Cowan, 2010). Drawing on Cowan, the cultural content of alternative contemporary cabaret is distinguishable from its modern counterpart in two ways: Modern cabaret was more political and alternative cabaret is sub-consciously political. I argue that the alternative
cabaret in *La Clique* performs notions of otherness and attracts those interested in experiencing otherness via performance. The performers in *La Clique*, who name the otherness that they perform, use theatrical distance as a technique for inclusion. Whether it is a play on gender or queerness, or the oddness of the profession in which they find themselves, they commentate on it with the spectators, in turn inviting their comment. The collapsing of distance is activated when performers and spectators blur roles between performing and spectating through performative interaction. They blur their differences by temporarily transforming through the partial adoption of each other’s role. Spectators cheer and applaud as Captain Frodo ‘succeeds’ in contorting through a tennis racket. The laughter shifts from laughing at the ‘freak’ to laughing with him, as he cleverly switches the joke to include the spectator. He challenges us to question perceptions of ‘success’. This moment imbues the environment with carnival laughter, subverting social mores and uniting participants against mainstream perceptions of success. The ‘freak’ names his otherness as ‘sameness’ and a performative response by the spectator signals their identification with other. The performer then spectates on this transformation; he watches their transformation from individual to group and the partial shifting of role from spectating to performing that occurs. The result is an experience of otherness facilitated by and through role distance and the performance of otherness.

**Playing in frame at ‘The Famous’**

Erving Goffman (1959, 1975) used the root metaphor of theatre as life to extensively investigate the use of language in social interactions in the disciplines of sociology, linguistics and anthropology. Goffman’s dramatological approach to the performative construction of identity as akin
to the construction and presentation of a theatrical role is central to my reading of the gestural interaction between performers and spectators. I draw on Goffman’s interpretation of frame to investigate the performative construction of identity co-created by performers and spectators, investigating why this reflexive process is a significant aspect of the experience of performance at ‘The Famous’. Bauman interpreting Goffman explains that social identity is a collaborative construction that “is produced and reproduced for presentation, recognition and ratification before an audience…” and that “the performative construction of identity foregrounds the reflexive capacity of the self to treat itself as an object” (Bauman, 2011, pp. 712-713). The spatial frame and staging of performance at the tent is intrinsically linked to otherness. Applying Butler’s concept of performativity, the reflexive experience of performance as identity construction is an example of situated practice. It is well established that in conventional theatre spectators and performers actively collaborate to sustain the unreality of the world presented onstage. At ‘The Famous’ this “playful unknowingness” (Goffman, 1975, p. 136) extends to the offstage world of social interaction. I propose that the frame of the tent immerses performers and spectators in an experience of performance that contributes to the experience of transgression as the blurring of role between performing and spectating. As established in Chapter One, spectators might be seeking an experience of ‘other’ when attending a Fringe festival, which I established is a contemporary reconstruction of the otherness of Bakhtin’s carnival. When festival participants arrive at ‘The Famous’ they encounter the ‘otherness’ of the cabaret/circus (I will elaborate on the ‘other’ and circus in the next section of this chapter). In the context of this research, I
propose that the frame of ‘The Famous’ is comprised of performance genres enacted on and offstage, the aesthetic of ‘The Famous’ itself, and the broader landscape of the Fringe. When interviewed for my research documentary (Appendix), owner of ‘The Famous’, David Bates explained that the mélange of performance styles and the aesthetic adopted by the employees at the tent, (the performers, front of house and backstage crew), is a vital part of its appeal. Drawing on Goffman I identify these aspects of the experience as components of the organisational frame.

Goffman, drawing on Bateson (1972), uses frame analysis to describe the “…principles of organisation, which govern events- at least social ones- and our subjective involvement in them,” (Bateson, 1972, pp. 10-11). Frame is a central concern of Willems-Braun, and as he asserts, “the transformation of urban spaces characterised by rationalisation and efficiency into ‘festival spaces’ marked by inter-subjectivity” (Willems-Braun, 1994, p. 82) is bound to influence the experience of the participants. In this case ‘The Famous’ is usually located in parkland, city squares or on the forecourt of major performing arts centres such as the Sydney Opera House or Melbourne Arts Centre. The transformation of conventional urban space by the emplacement of another building such as ‘The Famous’ opens up access to ideas about difference for participants in terms of race, gender, age, and class. Access, according to Willems-Braun is therefore ‘unequal’ in these reconfigured festival spaces and has the effect of disrupting or reordering the social and spatial relations of a city. Participants encounter radical difference in Fringe festival environments, as public space has been transformed to accommodate theatre, music, and street performance. Public space also temporarily becomes commercial space and this influences who
accesses those changed spaces during designated ‘festival’ time. Willems-Braun’s explains that, “the signs and symbols of the festival- such banners, posters, signs, crowds, clothing- demarcate a space where certain behaviour is acceptable that otherwise would not be (overtly political shows, public displays of sexuality, talking to strangers)” (Willems-Braun, 1994, p. 81), take priority of this space for a period of time. This disruption of ‘everyday’ space as a means to celebrate culture through ‘disorder’ activated by encounters with ‘others’ is also traceable to the origins of Bahktin’s carnival. In encountering difference, the festival space celebrates a flow toward disorder over efficiency and control, and its location in public space is what makes interaction between people that represent difference or that signify ‘other’ lifestyles accessible.

…despite a festival schedule still organised around ‘performances’ the distinction between performer and audience is often blurred for the festival format relies upon and demands interaction among patrons and between patrons and artists… (Willems-Braun, 1994, p. 82).

I now turn to Bateson to provide background to Goffman’s use of the concept of frame and discuss the way in which the frame transforms the spectator/performer interactions and their experience of performance.

Social scientist Gregory Bateson argued for the idea of meta-communication, the idea that the way in which we produce and receive information sits within a complex articulation of frames. This means that each group or community will interpret an act of communication based on a set of gestures that key the participants to ‘perform’ in a certain way within a certain frame. These ‘keys’ can include prescriptive terms, stylisations of speech or movement, (like rhyme or rhythm as in hip hop or beat poetry), or
references to tradition as concepts that contextualise the performance for a
given group (Bateson, 1972).

Goffman (1975) expanded Bateson’s ‘frame’ in his influential book
Frame Analysis. According to Goffman, “the frame organises more than
meaning; it also organises involvement” (Goffman, 1975, p. 345). He
asserts that during an activity limits are established concerning the level of
involvement and the frame also generates expectations about how deeply or
fully an individual is spontaneously engrossed in an activity. Therefore
crucially the context or framing of the event is what alters the spectator’s
perception. Goffman, Schechner and Turner all draw on Bateson’s notion of
frame to categorise various modes of performance in regards to production
and reception. Although for Schechner (2003), ‘frame’ is too rigid to apply
to performance and its analysis, which by its nature is porous, and therefore
he prefers to use the term ‘net’ rather than frame. Despite the use of
different descriptors, the surrounding contexts of space, aesthetics, and
performer/spectator interaction hold information about cultural practices
and human behaviours relevant to my research. The frame comprises of
several complex layers influenced by public and private interpretations of
viewing performance. In my study there is the frame of the Fringe festival
situated within the broader urban landscape, ‘The Famous’, an historic
venue situated in a bordered area within the park, and the performance of La
Clique, situated inside the tent. These three aspects of the tent, the space,
place and the performance -the Fringe, the tent and the ticketed performance
of La Clique- are introduced and discussed in Chapter One. The popular
entertainments associated with the tent’s history and traceable to the blurred
genre of performance found in La Clique, (vaudeville, burlesque, cabaret
and circus) are discussed in Chapters Two, Three, and Four. Each of these aspects of frame guides the level to which spectators and performers involve themselves in the performative social interaction, and contributes to their understanding of the event. Goffman defines the level to which an individual involves herself in an activity as dependent on the “engrossables” established (Goffman, 1975, p. 346). These are a set of materials designed to maintain focused attention. Goffman uses the example of a board or card game to emphasis how an activity applies a set of standards through which to measure how much an individual involves herself in play. The “engrossable” experience is inward looking and experiential and invites the spectator to take part in a “meaningful universe sustained by the activity” (Goffman, 1975, p. 346). At ‘The Famous’ the “engrossables” established are influenced by the ‘rules’ associated with cabaret, circus, and vaudeville and burlesque performance. These rules relate to the shape and size of the space, the positioning of the spectators in relation to the performers and the level of interaction encouraged, understood and expected. For example, the performance frame of cabaret, (as discussed in the previous section), encourages informal interactions that use performance as a form of play to open boundaries between performers and spectators. In Frame Analysis (1975) Goffman discusses the concept of ‘key’ and ‘keying’ performance, linking it closely to Bateson’s interpretation of play. Keying is when any given activity with a meaningful framework is, “Transformed into something patterned on this activity but seen by participants to be something quite else” (Goffman, 1959, p.44). Bateson examined the behavioural characteristics of otters fighting, noticing that in certain instances the otters also played at fighting with each other. Bateson argues
that this play came from an existing framework and identified play in animals as akin to play in human situations. Goffman, expanding on Bateson refers to play as ‘patterned behaviour’ that already has a meaning. Goffman explains that this pattern serves as a foundation for a form that can be transformed into something else, for example the “…transformation…of a strip of fighting behaviour into a strip of play” (Goffman, 1975, p. 41). The idea of a ‘strip of play’ informs Schechner’s (2003) expansion of Goffman’s ‘strip’ to define performance as restored behaviour, a version of playing influenced by the concepts of keying and frame. From this Goffman created a set of rules to state in detail the processes that occur to transform, “serious real action into something playful” (Goffman, 1975, p. 41). In this context the pattern behaviour is restored behaviour and takes the form of the performative interaction between spectators and performers that occurs on and offstage at ‘The Famous’. The interactions between performers and spectators are ‘keyed’ behaviours informed by the spatial and communicative frame of the tent. In my analysis of the performative interaction between performers and spectators in Chapter Six, I expand Goffman’s concept of keying to include transgression, arguing that the play that occurs involves a partial transformation of the role of spectator to performer and performer to spectator. An example of patterned behaviour at the tent is the activity of ushering a spectator to their seat; when keyed by the performers the interaction transforms into a complex and playful social interaction guided by the conventions of the spatial and performative frame. I apply the notion of frame to suggest that the social interaction transforms into the performative construction of identity embodied by the partial experience of otherness via the blurring of the roles between performing and
spectating. Playing within the frame holds the potential for mundane off-
stage interactions, such as ticketing collecting and serving drinks, to move
toward symbolic and meaningful experience, (a term retrieved from
consumer culture theory, and discussed in Chapter Six).

The behaviour is shaped by the frame of the tent and recalls Butler’s
theory of performativity. The performative interaction is a repetition of a
series of ‘utterances’ or behaviours keyed by the blurring of performance
genres within the spatial configuration of the Fringe. The relevance of play
to my research concerns the role shifting that occurs between spectators and
performers. Blurring the line between who is performing and who is
spectating disrupts the hierarchical separation between the on and offstage
world and transforms spectator/performer experience, and Goffman asserts
that this ‘mixes up’ the order of dominance’ amongst players. This is a
distinct difference from conventional theatre, whereby the space where the
audience sits in the auditorium is separate from the on stage world inhabited
by the actors. Shifting the dominance of the order within cabaret is
understood, encouraged, and anticipated by spectators and performers. For
example, role shifting between performer and spectator occurs when the
Emcee ‘plays’ with the audience using theatrical distance. Theatrical or role
distance as argued by Carroll (1999), is a technique used by cabaret
performers to collapse distance between the spectators and performers. For
example, in cabaret a performer moves in and out of role using the
technique of talking directly to the audience during asides. Goffman refers
to this as “breaking the frame”, arguing that it has the potential to “rekey”
the role organisation increasing or decreasing the individual’s distance from
the initial activity (Goffman, 1975, p. 359). When spontaneously addressing
the audience in an aside the performer is ‘herself’ and breaking frame she speaks directly to selected spectators. She then returns to the character she is playing and continues the rehearsed part of the act. The performer distances herself from the character when she breaks the frame and as a result increases her proximity to the spectators, who are invited closer to the action and encouraged to respond. When being herself, it is ‘as if’ the performer is commentating on her own performance and including the spectators in the conversation. The interaction between the ‘real’ person and the spectator is an-other performance co-created by the performer and spectator. This ‘spontaneous’ action is carefully keyed by the performer and understood by the spectator as an indication that ‘play’ can occur. Another important ‘rule’ is that in play objects are often used to evoke a sense of play, and these objects “may include the body as a whole or its parts” (Goffman, 1975, p. 43). Applying Goffman, the aesthetic of ‘The Famous’ is an example of an object used to evoke play. The building is an authentic art-deco mirror tent and is framed by the performers as a simulacrum of bohemian cabaret.

Goffman asserts that when a framework is keyed participants are aware that a transformation is about to take place (Goffman, 1975). In the constructed environment of the cabaret/circus show La Clique at ‘The Famous’ spectators and performers anticipate the performative interaction and agree to play along because of the strength of the performative and spatial frame. Following this, I propose that the blurring of role between performing and spectating is assumed through the complex process of keying using performance as a form of play. The result of the playful interaction is a meaningful encounter with ‘other’ framed within an an-other
environment. I propose that the successful framing elicits a temporary transformative experience for spectators and performers that generates symbolic experience, and I discuss this further in the upcoming section and in relation to ritual and performance in Chapter Six.

**Co-creating the frame: Theatrical event and context**

As established in the introductory chapter, performance is an essentially contested concept requiring tentative and nuanced treatment. In this enquiry performance is considered from a contextual perspective by examining the spectator/performer relations in the offstage space at The Famous Spiegeltent.

By applying the concept of performance as “culturally coded behavior” (Carlson, 1996, p. 4), and the notion the communicative frame to interpret the context of the performer-spectator dynamics, the socio-spatial relationship started to crystallize. After analyzing the staging of genre in popular entertainments and the relationship to transgression, I needed to search further afield for literature that examined the spectator-performer relations in the offstage space. I moved to theatrical event theory. I anticipated that this literature would aid in analysis of the interview data that revealed a spiegeltent performance is “an experience” and it “starts at the door” (Appendix, Haylock, personal communication, 2006). Further, the interviews revealed a performative language and aesthetic adopted by the ‘non-performers’ that contributed to the creation of the frame in which spectators and performers related.

The study of the theatrical event offers an integrated approach to the study of performance within social systems that use theatrical events to communicate. It involves the study of the performance, the audience and the surrounding contexts, by placing theatrical event and the ‘context’ of the event as central. Van Maanen’s (2004), research of theatrical events and contexts explores how artistic-social processes are framed by the contexts they simultaneously create. The theatrical event creates a temporary situation- one that exits apart and within reality- and as such the pre-existing conditions of the event; the socio-spatial and cultural contexts influence its
reception. Van Maanen’s complex and sophisticated theory of how contexts frame theatrical events explores four aspects of the theatrical frame; the communicative frame, the organizational, frame, the institutional frame and the societal frame.

The *communicative frame* organises the experience of the event via the framing of the perception of the performance by spectator’s and performers. The *organizational frame* pertains to the physical aspects of the time and place of an event and how they are used, the theatrical venue is the primary component of the organizational frame; the *institutional frame* refers to the theatre world in which it is located, its history and context and the societal frame- the society around the theatre world. For this research the communicative frame is the main aspect used and applied to examine the spectator –performer relations.

By applying Van Maanen’s (Maanen van, 2004) communicative frame to understand the theatrical frame at the tent, two things occurred; First I came to understand the performer-spectator relations as a communicative frame influenced by the surrounding contexts spatially and socially. This complemented my use of Goffman’s frame theory to interpret the staging of the Fringe festival in which the Spiegeltent is situated. Second the literature of theatrical event theory does not explore this aspect of the communicative frame. It covers the expectation and perception of spectators before the arrival at the venue, their reception of the act of stage, but it does not analyse the interaction during the *in-between* stage; between the arrival at the venue and the performance commencing. At The Famous Speigeltent this is where a crucial part of what Creative Producer Brett Haylock calls “the experience” occurs. The in-between-ness is the focus of the socio-spatial analysis and the theory of the staging of spectator experience. Therefore theatrical event theory does not fully answer the research question/s:

- The staging of acts always focuses on performers and performances. Why?
- The staging of spectator experience is not well understood. Why?
- The staging of acts for spectators always focuses on reception. Why?
Subsequently, I apply an aspect of Van Maanen’s theory of theatrical events to interpret the frame, and then depart to Consumer Culture Theory to further investigate the staging of the experience in immersive contexts from the performer perspective in chapter five. I now discuss how the concept of communicative frame contributed to the understanding of the frame of the communication between performers and spectators.

The communicative frame shapes itself during an event based on the interaction between the perception systems and the frame around those systems. It consists of a system of perception shared by spectators and performers, and Van Maanen argues two aspects of the shared field of perception inform how a theatrical event is constructed. One, the individual perception of the participants influences the experience and two the presence of a system of perception outside the frame of the event both shapes and informs the event (Van Maanen, pg. 243). The dynamic relationship between the communicative frame and the shared field of perception contributes to the performed perceptions, which are dominant in the theatrical frame. Van Mannen is concerned with how theatrical ‘eventness’ contributes the realization of artistic values on the side of spectators. ‘Eventness’ is a phenomenological concept that encompasses the means by which theatrical events help create cultural values and narratives for individuals and communities by accessing imagination and play on the level of perception. Van Maanen uses ‘Eventness’ as a framework to understand how the perception system of an audience is accessed via aesthetic products- performances- that create and express human behavior using theatrical signs (pg. 249). The communicative frame therefore examines how specific contexts generated during the event contribute to the realization of it for spectators (pg. 254). The effective framing of an event, set-ups expectations for spectator about the experience of the event and this occurs before they arrive at the performance and venue. Schechner’s (2003) theorization of the ‘whole performance event’, explains that the performance starts with audience expectations, activated by the choice to purchase a ticket, which in turn has been influenced by producers, marketing, festival advertising etc. Van Maanen argues that expectations are
part of the communicative frame and that the marketing, advertising, publicity and other prior information are designed to construct an effective frame.

The marketing on the Spiegel website, and by Adelaide Fringe and Sydney Festival for La Clique at The Famous Spiegeltent advertises a risqué, carnival atmosphere, an adults only cabaret/burlesque/variety show. The images are sexy, bold and alternative; signs of circus nostalgia, and Barnum and Bailey-esque promises for spectacle frame sword-swallowing carnivalesque characters in bold colours. Review quotes from international newspapers nestle alongside five stars to indicate its popularity globally, its award-winning statues and its multiple “sold-out” seasons. This “must see-ness”, is typical of a hit festival show; signs well understood by spectators and one that creates a clear expectation for “a good night out”. The now $70 per ticket price tag also sets the bar high (the original cost of tickets for the first Australian season in 2006 was $50). The framing of the event at this point therefore establishes a perception system for spectators to participate in when they arrive at the venue, laying the foundation for the communicative frame to continue to be created by the performance and the performers. When spectators arrive “at the door”, the experience continues as they encounter the non-performer performing. The use of ‘role-distance’ (Carroll, 1999) creates the context for the communication; it uses informal performance offstage to organise the experience of the formal act of performance onstage, and therefore the conditions in which the communicative frame is staged, organises the experience of the event.

In applying Van Maanen’s communicative frame to the interactions that occur between the non-performer/performer the spectator meets at the door, I extend the analysis of the staging of the performance and the spectator, to the staging of the spectator and performer. I argue that the communicative frame at The Famous Spiegeltent is co-created by the non-performer adopting role to communicate with the spectator when they arrive at the venue, before the performance starts.

The process used to interpret the communicative frame at The Spiegeltent was mobilized by the analysis of the interviews conducted during the fieldwork, and by the genre analysis used for the literature
review. These two aspects of the dissertation revealed that the shared field of perception drew on a blurring of the performance genres of circus, vaudeville, cabaret and burlesque within the organisational frame of an antique spiegeltent, within the institutional frame of the Fringe festival in the societal frame of international alternative cultural production. The genres have an existence outside the frame of tent (as evidenced in the literature review), and they also exist outside the frame of the performance of La Clique at the tent. The tent has an existence outside La Clique, (as La Clique grew increasingly successful it to moved beyond the frame of the tent, touring to larger venues worldwide, as discussed in the introductory chapter). Importantly, the success of La Clique deeply influenced the communicative and organizational frame of the staging of spectator experience at the tent, and in the broader environment of the Fringe festival. This demonstrates how the communicative frame, and the shared field of perception operate within a complex system of interrelatedness informing the context of the whole theatrical event.

**The multi-voiced cabaret: Constructing other identities**

The transformation from spectator to performer and vice versa is less conscious in the off-stage environment where another significant transformation takes place. The social dynamics between spectators and performers are key to blur the boundaries of performance. The performers wear clothing and bodily transformations such as tattoos and piercings that emulate a tribal link to circus culture. What differentiates them is the style of dress; a mix of vintage, with cabaret can-can skirts and Trilby’s that evokes a bohemian/carnival aesthetic. This is emulated, (in some cases), by the spectators and is an example of how objects, such as clothing, haircuts and shoes key the spectator to temporarily join the ‘tribe’ at ‘The Famous’. The significance of these ritual gestures is analysed further in Chapter Six drawing on Schechner and Turner. The language used by the performers sits within what the circus –folk refer to as the ‘world’ of ‘The Famous’.
Goffman argues that referring to a ‘world’ is contestable as in many cases it is not ‘real’ or ‘actual’, such as a ‘world’ depicted on stage (Goffman, 1959). However, in this heterotopic environment the realm of the tent is real and unreal, actual and constructed. The performative interaction between spectators and performers co-constructs this ‘world’, and is part of the unconscious transformation of role that occurs through play that distinguishes the experience from a visit to a traditional theatre performance whereby by performers and spectators rarely interact. The landscape at ‘The Famous’ exemplifies Schechner’s (2003) concept of a space where performers, spectator, space, time and play interact to foster connectivity and groupness. The experience is reflexive and designed to facilitate the formation of temporary communities. As Schechner reiterates:

Ritualised behaviour, including performances, is a means of continually testing the boundaries between play and “for real”. The special ordering of time and place… [The] play-frame…are signals that the behaviour taking place is within the brackets is “only play”. (p. 46).

The interactions occurring at the tent are a convergence of what Goffman defined as platform events and celebrative social occasions. The platform event situates the activity before the audience; such as a play or concert and the management of the gaze is on a singular focus that essentially maintains a spectatorial viewpoint (Goffman, 1975). A celebrative social occasion, such as a festival or ritual, encompasses multiple and planned foci within specific boundaries. There is a programmed schedule of shared performances, (rather than a singular event), designed to bring participants together in a unifying space with multiple activities that may include a platform performance. La Clique at
‘The Famous’ is an example of these two practices: *La Clique* is the platform event and ‘The Famous’, positioned with the Fringe festival, is the celebrative social occasion. Goffman emphasises that cultural specialists, (in this instance owner David Bates, the artists in *La Clique*, and the crew who work at ‘The Famous’), create the production and coordination of these events. The interactions at ‘The Famous’ reflect Singer’s (1959) notion of ‘cultural performance’ foreshadowed in the introduction. Bauman (2011) interprets cultural performances as:

…highly reflexive display events – cultural forms about culture – in which the deepest meanings and values of a culture are embodied, enacted, and placed on display before an audience. Thus materialized and placed on view, these enactments allow not only for the contemplation of received and authoritative truths, but for experimentation, critique, even subversion (p. 715).

This summary of cultural performance and its reflexive function is exemplified at ‘The Famous’. As part of a Fringe festival it is a cultural performance, a “coordinated public occasion” (Goffman, 1975), that relies on collective participation. Bauman explains that performance itself is reflexive and argues that it is “broadly metacultural”, for it creates a means for culture to objectify and therefore scrutinise itself (Bauman, 2011). The reflexive moves beyond reflecting and mimesis. It contains the potential for transformation, and this sits within the othered space of the performer/spectator nexus. In this ‘space’ there is the potential to key performative action that embodies people’s understanding of their culture through active participation. Bauman (1992) also argues that reflexive performance also operates in a socio-psychological manner emphasizing:
performance constitutes the performing self …as an object for itself as well as for others, performance is an especially potent and heightened means of taking the role of the other and looking back at oneself from that perspective… (pp. 47-48)

Applying Bauman that the blurring of role between performing and spectating at the tent activates the experience of looking back at oneself. For example, as the performer adopts the partial role of the spectator observing the spectators perform; they are in effect watching a version of themselves played back. The ‘other’ of the spectator embodies a version of himself or herself, and they too are partially embodying and reflecting the role of other. This symbolic experience of other via reflexive performance has a unifying effect that deepens the boundary open encounter, moving it toward symbolic experience. However, there are certain components of the genre beyond direct address, physical and skills based acts, and its location in tent structures, that contribute to the potential for participants to “illuminate identity” (Bauman, 2011). It is important to note that spectators do not arrive at the tent with an act per say. The transformational aspect of experience at ‘The Famous’ is activated by play and keyed by the frame of the performance genre. I apply Bauman’s notion of the symbolic aspect of the experience, which is about adopting the role of other as a means to look closer at oneself. In a merging of being and doing the participants use performative play to simultaneously observe and embody the other, and this performative act is deeply connective. I apply Turner to argue that this reflexive experience of the other is what creates *communitas* at ‘The Famous’.

One of Schechner’s questions of performance is, ‘Can it generate its own reflexive frame?’ (Schechner, 1985). In the case of the blurry
representation of cultural performance constructed at ‘The Famous’, the
answer is yes, and the frame created leads the spectators toward the
performative and the performers toward the spectative. The aim of the
cabaret is to construct a bridge between performer and spectator that is at
various times challenging, inclusive, reflexive and playful. Cabaret
performance has the potential to intensify experience through its
construction of identity. Bates emphasises that the intimacy of ‘The
Famous’ is part of the appeal for spectators. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (Roach
et al., 2001) argues that there is security to be found in small autonomous
groups (such as the 250—300 spectators who attend a singular performance
of La Clique) and Schechner (1985) argues this enables participants to play
with reality as a way to re-examine behaviour by exaggerating, repeating
and remembering it. In cabaret performers and spectators are “looking back”
(Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2001, p. 110) at themselves as they adopt the role of
the other. The spectators partly adopt a performative role making their
experience visible to themselves and each other. This dissolves the
experience of the individual by commentating from the realm of the group.
The spectator crosses the line between them and us, performers and
spectators, signaling the existence of a broader cabaret community. The
performer, “looking back” on herself watches the performance of the
spectator: By adopting the role of spectator the performer assumes the role
of other consuming an-other spontaneous performance. The value of this is
that the blurring of role stimulates the transformation from one state to an-
other. It is an experience of a partial transgression toward otherness. This
facilitates shared experience and the formation of community, and enables
the group to reflect on a collective societal identity. I discuss this assertion
in depth in Chapter Six in the context of Turner’s concept of *communitas* introduced in Chapter One.

The performance is the conduit that opens up the terrain between performers and spectators using the play of difference as the frame. In *La Clique*, when sword-swallow, *Miss Behave*, breaks the frame of her act by raising an eyebrow before she swallows, the spectators are suddenly alerted to the risk she is taking. What does the swallowing of the sword mean? What is Miss Behave commenting on? Using role distance, she is asking spectators to reflect on perceptions of risk and femininity by adopting an act traditionally performed by men. In a carnivalesque manner she makes a comment on phallic symbols and provokes us to re-think their centrality. Just before the tip of the sword enters her throat, she drops the smile and concentrates, this aspect of the performance sobers the audience as the ‘actual’ skill, and the illusion of risk and human element collide to re-configure the response (Bauman, 2011, pp. 47-48). In cabaret, Cowan argues that the reflexive element of cabaret gives a community the opportunity to “see itself in its many forms, to improvise scenarios of delight and discomfort, and ultimately be in a state of becoming rather than already made” (Cowan, 2010, p. 53). The state of becoming is also an example of an ‘other’ state of being. Cowan refers to the ‘structure of feeling’ engendered by certain styles of performance such as cabaret that creates a social/cultural frame of mind. Drawing on Raymond Williams, Cowan (2010) explains the effect of the activation of the social frame of mind includes:

An appreciation of variety, risk, difference, provocation and surprise, accompanied by a concurrent sympathy with or high tolerance for the
roughness-round-the edges aesthetic that characterises many cabaret performances; it is a consciousness that allows an audience to enjoy the show not in spite of the mixed-bagness of it, but because of it. (pp. 50-51).

Spaces that construct cultural performances create a reflexive space that encourages ‘being and doing’ by engaging participants in performative gestures that include an awareness of their own role in the performance. Awareness of one’s place in the performance as either a spectator or performer houses the potential for transformation. By encouraging audience participation on multiple levels, Schechner argues that ‘real behaviour’ has the potential to transform into symbolic behaviour. The awareness of the playing of a role versus real behaviour is akin to pattern or restored behaviour and this reflexive experience is therefore playful. The participant, whether a spectator or performer is the “author” of her own actions, and the choice to participate, a crucial part of the liminoid space of play offered by the frame of the event, is voluntary. This idea links to the concept of the partial adoption of the role of the other; it indicates a transition toward otherness, which is also a ‘state of becoming’ (Schechner, 2003).

Goffman refers to the physical environment in which a performance takes place as the ‘setting’ or ‘scenic parts’ (again applying the performance metaphor) and the ‘scenic parts’ of cabaret acts are usually small-scale and flexible, unencumbered by the baggage of sets, lighting, or the complex technical requirements of traditional circus performance (Goffman, 1959, pp. 34-35). The way in which the spectator perceives performance is a ‘front’, and this is divided into the “manner and appearance presented by the performer “ (Goffman, 1959, pp. 34-35) The personal front refers to, the race, clothing, sex, age, size, posture, speech patterns, and personal gestures,
that are fixed and transitory modes of being. The ‘appearance’ can be
transitory or fixed depending on the nature of the activity, and performed
elements such as the costume, social status or temporary ritual state can
transform according to the occasion at hand. The manner, illuminates the
interactive role the performer will be expected to play (Schechner, 2003),
and in the case of cabaret “…the relationship between performer and
spectator is one at once of intimacy and hostility, the nodal points of
participation and provocation” (Cowan, 2010, p. 34). Cowan argues that the
role of the “producer, organiser, curator” of alternative cabaret is a crucial
role that contributes to spectator participation. In cabaret the performance is
continually ‘restored’ and re-constructed in the present moment, everything
is ‘twice performed’ or retrieved from past ideas of the convention. Bauman
asserts, “… performance always manifests an emergent dimension, as no
two performances are ever exactly the same” (Bauman, 1992, p. 42), this is
particularly relevant to the improvised environment of cabaret. The careful
framing of the environment and the constructed identities performed are real
and faked, constructed and performed, and therefore an ‘authentically faked’
present is created and experienced by all participants. The emergent
dimension relies on the knowledge and acceptance of these conventions as
the rules that guide the play between,

To further develop the hypotheses about the response the House staff
had to the characteristics of the show (i.e. the genres) and how these
influenced how they communicated with the spectators, and to resolve the
question of which framework to apply, I turned to theatrical event theory.

The emphasis in theatrical event research is primarily between the
spectator-performer, the socio-cultural context and the performance. The
analysis of the context of the surrounding environment- the space- is central
to the evolution of the theory of transgression. It contextualises the
exploration of the staging of the Fringe festival, and the performer spectator dynamics using Van Maanen’s theorization of context and the communicative frame. The value of exploring theatrical event theory was also initiated by my application of Sauter’s notion of theatre as the “playing of culture” (Sauter, 2004 pg. 4) to read the play of performance in the offstage dimension.

Sauter explains the *playing of culture* as the uniting of performers and spectators through the pleasure of watching the staging of a theatrical event as important as the embodiment of the character/s displayed. He explains that play is based on tacit knowledge and relies on unspoken rules. To fully experience play one has to physically participate, by enacting the rules, so the combination of the physical with the tacit creates the conditions for play, and importantly, these outcomes are unpredictable.

Jackson and Shulamith Lev-Aladgrem’s, (2004) research about alternative theatre and audience participation, research expands the discussion of the playing of culture by introducing aesthetic experience as a realm that influences the level of participation. They also apply concepts of ‘framing’ and ‘aesthetic distance’ to discuss techniques employed by alternative theatre practitioners stimulate audience participation.

The notion of ‘aesthetic experience’ was first identified by Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson in a study that used semi-structured in-depth interviews with ‘art experts’ in museums, *An Interpretation of the Aesthetic Encounter*, (The Paul Getty Trust, 1990) investigated in the separation of the artistic content from the structure of the aesthetic experience provided insight into the nature of the experience and structure of seeing art. Research attempting to apply aesthetic criteria to interpret audience experience adds value to my focus on the ‘spiegeltent aesthetic’ as described by the ‘spiegeltent experts’ in the interviews. As established the placing of audience in an intimate and antique environment, conversation between ‘carnies’ and the spectators at the door, and the employment of genre blurring performance are all techniques that enhance the aesthetic experience. Crucially, as argues by Jackson and Shulamith Lev-Aladgrem’s, (2004). “… this participation goes beyond the ‘reception process’ of the performance and becomes a concrete physical action”
(pg. 209), who also contend that the breaking of barriers between audience and performer is a recurring fundamental feature of alternative theatre. Once again, this research is focused on how participation by the audience in the scripted or planned theatrical event impacts, or in some cases may change the dramatic action. Jackson and Shulamith Lev-Aladgrem offer some interesting insights for this research. Specifically by discussing how the theatrical frame can be maintained when disrupted by the audience- how the sociological can be merged with aesthetic, the anthropological with the performative as explored by Turner (1982), and Schechner (1985), a central concern of the theory of ‘partial experience’ with its focus on the sociological aspects rather than the aesthetic dimension of the ‘actual’ performance.

Jackson and Shulamith Lev-Aladgrem discuss how audience participation is enabled by examining the context in which performers and spectators interact and highlight the importance of the articulation of boundaries between performing and spectating. They argue that, even in the most complete form of interaction whereby spectators take on actual roles in the performance (such as in the socio-political theatre of Augusto Boal), if boundary lines are unclear or transgressed then audiences may feel inhibited or even frightened (pg. 232). At ‘The Famous’ there are conventional ‘signposts’ that delineate certain boundaries for spectators- the queue, the tickets, the seats etc.; the ‘outer frames’ that cue the spectator to respond. The ‘inner frames’ sits in the realm of the ‘playing of culture’, and at the tent, the culture played is ‘spiegeltent performance’. Applying Sauter, (1988), spectators and performers are equal players, and the carefully constructed (and paradoxically spontaneous), experience of participation cements the feeling ‘authentic’ experience that spectators and performers might be seeking at the tent, by reciprocal playing.

Importantly, the literature of theatrical event theory does not engage with audience participation from the performers perspective. It wasn’t until I moved to Consumer Culture Theory to further interpret the reciprocal nature of the spectator-performer dynamic that I could apply a hypotheses, a statement of an explanatory nature, designed to suggest that in fact the intention of the crew and Creative Producer, at the tent had in fact
succeeded, (represented through my experience as a spectator in the documentary). The experience did “start at the door” for me, as intended by those interviewed about how spectator’s respond to the environment-the aesthetic experience. The role playing of the house staff used artistic, sensory and symbolic levels of communication to facilitate this experience framed by the context of the genre’s employed onstage, and the antique aesthetic of the tent. This confluence of the theatrical event, the socio-cultural contexts and the aesthetic experience of the spectators and performers responding to each other might be applied as a general statement to explain the experience of ‘spiegeltent performance’ as one of transgression via the blurring of role toward other.

If the core of theatre work is how artists embody a style that “…speaks its own language without becoming unintelligible” (Schechner, 2003, p. 12) then the heteroglossic languages embodied in La Clique at ‘The Famous’ invite spectators to temporarily immerse themselves in performative culture beyond the stage. The performative culture is reflected through dress as a mode of performance, as well as through the gestures adopted during the performances that blur the lines between performing and spectating. The communication is performative and draws on the multi-voiced nature of carnival. There is a convergence of conscious and subconscious performances that open boundaries between who is watching and who is performing. The blurring of role enables all participants to watch themselves, an example of the reflexive nature of carnival. The performative language ‘spoken’ at the tent provides a site for reflection about the nature of the relationships, their structure and their potentialities (Schechner, 2003). The performative interaction and the potential for participants to partially experience the role of other indicates that ‘The Famous’ is an environment designed to facilitate an experience of transgression. The purpose of transgressing toward other is a complex trajectory through which one deepens ones experience of self and society. The value lies in the reflexive experience of watching ones culture, and affirming or contradicting the normative behaviours that define it. Applying the research of ethnolinguist Richard Bauman’s (1989) ‘doubling’ effect of performance on spectators and performers is useful to further understand how performance and performativity may interact. Bauman, attempts to
nominate a semantic field to locate performance by looking at how it is internalized. The concept of ‘double-consciousness’ acknowledges that part of performance is always for an audience or observer, and also that an individual brings awareness to their own performance by recognizing that occasionally the audience is the self. By analyzing the staging of spectator experience in immersive environments, this research examines the ‘doubling of consciousness’ and its relationship to performativity and the blurring of role between performers and spectators. In this research the doubling of performance not only explores the spectator response, (well documented in reception theory), but how the spectator transforms the performer. The performer is not only aware she is performing; she also becomes aware that she is spectating, spectating on the performance of the spectator, who adopts the culturally coded behaviour of the spectator as performer when cued to interact. The performer is then spectating on a version of self as other. The double blurring of roles between performing and spectating constitutes a transgression.

To move beyond my initial interpretation of La Clique at ‘The Famous’ as pure entertainment using performance theory as an analytical framework has enabled an exploration of the deeper structures between the space, the performers and the spectators. The key questions in Schechner’s analysis of performances, “…who performers are, how they achieve their temporary or permanent transformations, and what role the audience plays” (Schechner, 1985, p. 32), are therefore at the core of my research. Introducing the historical origins of the modern cabaret genre alongside a discussion of its form is fundamental in developing an understanding of the complex interactions that occur at ‘The Famous’. Therefore examining the form of the modern cabaret and its reliance on the dissolution of boundaries between; class, and gender; audiences and artists, helps understand the interactions within the specific cultural context of ‘The Famous’.
There is one more significant genre that features prominently on the continuum of performance I am constructing to engage in my construction of a theory of spectator/performer dynamics at ‘The Famous’ – the circus, traditional and new, which features prominently in the content of La Clique. Circus tropes are also reflected in the management style and narrative of ‘The Famous’ preserved by the artists and producers who travel with the tent year round. The following section provides an introduction to the history of traditional circus and the more recent genre – new circus. I investigate the relationship between new circus and spectacle focusing on the relationship between spectacle and the blurring of role between performing and spectating in new circus.

**Circus and spectacle: The ‘wow’ factor in new circus**

Vaudeville, cabaret and burlesque all have historical connections to transgression. They transgress societal norms in terms of who appears onstage and each genre has re-constructed space to expose middle-class spectators to otherness; political, racial and sexual, framing it as entertainment and leisure to be consumed in the safety of legitimised public space. The reframing of space to legitimise otherness for mass consumption is of particular note as historically vaudeville, burlesque, cabaret and more recently new circus, have transgressed origins on the fringe of society to gain mainstream exposure and notoriety.

As established in the introduction, The Famous Spiegeltent is a version of a travelling circus tent, sans the sawdust; but neither the tent, nor La Clique purely embody traditional circus culture. Traditional circus culture and contemporary circus culture are two distinct, yet overlapping
forms of circus that need further articulation. Both draw on the same skill set and traditional acts, in Australia sometimes drawing on the same performers and trainers (Lemon, 2011). Traditional circus has been active in Australia since the 1830s (St. Leon, 1992), they began as small family operated touring companies and continue to be family owned today. Lemon ‘s historical research into the history of family owned circus in Australia emphasises most current traditional circuses can trace the owner’s families back to original this time, other to European shows (2011, pg. 2). These shows use a traditional show format- a series of acts in a ring- under a big top. Primarily the structure of the show is a series of unconnected physical acts including clownering (which may include a narrative). They move cast and crew from town to town and live on site in caravans permanently. Traditional circuses are private businesses, some include animals in their programming some don’t. Some of the circus acts in La Clique are borne of a relatively new sub-genre of circus that emerged in Australia, Canada and France in the late in the 1970s and evolved into the distinct sub-genre of contemporary or ‘new circus’ by early 1990s. New-circus, or as some refer to it, nu-circus evidences influences from carnival, traditional circus and burlesque alongside other forms of performance that merged artistic notions of theatre and cabaret with street theatre, circus and visual spectacle. These circus artists joined traditional shows to learn skills and acts and then

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Australian Theatrical Production Company, Strut n’ Fret, who annually produce The Garden of Unearthly Delights at Adelaide Fringe festival, use this alternative spelling of new-circus on their website, as do several other independent artists who perform in this genre currently popular at Fringe festivals worldwide.
returned to their theatre-oriented companies to create political work. Contemporary circuses in Australia generally operate as not-for-profit arts companies, with most receiving government support. Cast and crew rarely reside on site and the often change. New circus performs is predominantly programmed in theatres, at festivals, and in other open public spaces including parks, gardens, or alternative Fringe spaces. Circus theorist Peta Tait argues that the identity of nineteenth-century circus evolved significantly in the 20th century from the promotion of the strength and skills of circus bodies to the impression that the circus represented difference, abnormality and even violence. This evolved even further when parodied by new circus toward the close of the century. The aesthetic of new circus is distinctive from traditional circus as it offered an ‘overarching emotional tone’ that displays extreme interpretations of human behaviour. It disrupts concepts of beauty and ‘decorative femininity’ associated with aerial performance in traditional circus, whilst maintaining focus on the strength and skill of the performer (Tait, 2005). The emergence of new circus was influenced by troupes such as Archaos from France, Cirque du Soleil from Canada and Circus Oz from Australia. These animal-free circuses transgressed social identity, sexuality, political values, and traditional circus. Tait explains, “Archaos … delivered anarchic intimidation, Cirque du Soleil continues to offer romantic exuberance and Circus Oz present witty silliness” (Tait, 2005, p. 120). New circus presents a postmodern commentary on social and cultural issues, in particular concepts of identity, gender and sexuality. Tait (2005) argues new circus is closer to theatre than circus and that it is possible to trace the development of physical theatre from this form:
New circus remains closer to theatre in its aesthetic and thematic purpose and unity, and because performers work in relationship with others displaying qualities that range from quaintly charming to outrageous and obnoxious. (p. 121)

New circus is also inspired by the subversion of 20th century tropes of circus represented in cinema and literature, and from the realm of live circus and sideshow performance (Tait, 2005, p. 120).

Aristotle’s *Poetics* discourse on the ‘origins’ of dramatic action shaped conventional definitions in traditional dramatic theory positioned spectacle as an ambivalent and low form, separated from serious art (Kershaw, 2003, p. 592). Aristotle argued that there is a fundamental interconnection between drama and logic, and he privileged plot over other forms of theatre that integrate music, and drama (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2001). Spectacles focus on the visual and visceral aspects of performance have seen it overlooked as genre for serious consideration until Aristotle’s theory of dramatic action was disrupted by studies of popular entertainments and postmodern performance that bring spectacle into the dramatic action onstage. This chapter investigates the relationship between spectacle, new circus performance and the role of the spectator.

The radical reimagining of new circus bears little resemblance to the atmosphere of traditional circus with its focus on family entertainment, however both utilize spectacle to entertain and engage. The definition of circus is contested and remains so. In the 1970s as the content and style of circus evolved so did understandings of what constitutes it. With the evolution of new forms of alternative circus that challenged the traditional tent-touring circus, the meaning of the term was disrupted.
This thesis draws on Tait’s (2005) definition of circus:

Circus as an institution, and through its separate skills, exemplifies cultural attunement to bodily display, and remains as opportunistically responsive to social fashions, political events and shifts in cultural moods [and] has been reinvigorated by the post 1960s circus skills movement which produced animal-free new circuses (pg.6)

There is an abundance of historical literature regarding the impact and reach of Australian circus, its social structure, aesthetics of production, economics, and cultural significance as an example of the appeal of popular entertainments to mass audiences. For example the nodes of discussion now include vast historiographies and socio-cultural studies of Australian circus, as in Farrell’s research is a comparative study exploring the influence of Chinese circus training on Australian circus in the late nineteenth century (1850s-1860s, and in 1980s-1990s (2007), Mullet’s thesis charting the rise of alternative circus, its inclusion and institutionalization in Australian circus culture (2005), and more recently Arrighi’s most recent contribution to circus history The Fitzgerald Brother’s Circus (2015), a detailed historiography of one Australia and New Zealand’s’ most prominent circus’ in the late nineteenth century. Toole Stott’s extensive research into circus – he gathered a bibliography of fourteen thousand references, does not account for the vast amount of literature published since 1970.

My research does not delve into this already densely populated area, as it not an historiographical or archival analysis concerned with the evolution of this genre. However, it is necessary to briefly comment on its origins in Britain, Europe and America to preface my positioning of La Clique as an example of postmodern performance that blurs the boundaries
between circus, vaudeville, burlesque and cabaret. In the following section I provide a brief overview of the historical origins of circus, followed by a discussion of the interaction between spectacle and the spectator/performer dynamics.

**Circus spaces and faces: The spectacle of other**

Cultural historians agree that the origin of circus is the gathering of fairground and other popular entertainments into one performance space, (Croft-Cooke; 1976; Culhane 1990; St Leon; 1983; Speaight 1980; Disher, 1942; Thetard 1947), and that the modern circus began with equestrian displays, acrobatics, slapstick clowning and adopted the descriptor “circus” in 1782. Since then spatially and contextually circus has continually adapted via the physical acts of human display, and in it’s staging where it has been situated in purpose built structures – tents and buildings, appearing outside in gardens and marketplaces, and in pre-existing theatres and stadiums (Mullett, 2007, pg. 28). British circus originates from the fairground tradition of the late eighteenth century. After these entertainments dwindled in the late 19th early 20th century circus thrived, until declining again with the introduction of cinema and television (Carmeli, 1995). Phillip Astley developed the new theatrical genre of circus in 1768 when he began riding horses in a ring in London. The performance comprised of a series of act including clownering and acrobatics on and off horseback. European circus performance originated in the medieval market place in Italy and is steeped in the theatrical influences of mime and commedia dell’arte narratives (Barba, 2002). Americans were watching multi-act circus performances as early as the 1790’s, and by the 1820’s a trip to the circus had become a significant national pastime (West, 1981, p. 265). *Circus Firat*, established
in 1847 by Exeter-born horseman and publican Robert Avis Radford (1817-1865) in Tasmania is the earliest recorded in Australia (St. Leon, 1983). The subsequent gold rush boom in 1851 saw a proliferation of small-scale circuses, such as *Ashton's Circus* (still touring) travelling to new white settlements by 1856 (St. Leon, 2000, p. 285).

Traditional traveling tent circus positioned the audiences around a circus-ring, an evocation of the architecture of the Greek amphitheater, the Roman coliseum and the circular space of the medieval marketplace. The reasoning behind the use of circular tent structures was that they were mobile and enabled spectacular acts to be seen from all seats. This configuration remains the standard set up for travelling circus companies. As the nineteenth century circus grew it separated itself from the sideshow and carnival traditions and became synonymous with big top presentations and hippodrome spectacles. The sideshow maintained its open-air stages and closed the booths associated with the fairground of the eighteenth century (Tait, 2005, p. 137). Conventionally a travelling tent circus sets up on the outskirts, (or in bounded spaces such as parkland), on the edges of a town or city, reflecting a “cultural mobility within geographical and social spaces” (Tait, 2005, p. 138). The “cultural mobility” of the circus exposes spectators and performers to otherness in a different way to static venues. The circus literally moves from place to place bringing its otherness to other spaces, and cultures, regional and metropolitan. This exposure to other identities is the essence of the appeal of the circus. The circus company engages in a “display and objectification of a totality of life”, that signs outsider status to the spectator enabling them to link the circus to an illusionary history and community (Carmeli, 2001, pg 162). Carmeli links
the conventions of the circus of the 1970s, to the traditional circus born of
nineteenth century modernity and some of these characteristics, such as the
visibility of the circus performers who travel with the tent, are present in the
circus life represented at ‘The Famous’. The visibility of the circus
identities, the appearance of the tent as if overnight and the “expected
unexpectedness” (advertising signals its arrival weeks in advance), of its
stay, is also an important part of the shaping of the experience of otherness
(Carmeli, 2001, p. 162). The symbol of the circus ring and how it
differentiates notions of new and traditional circus is of relevance here.

Early circus’ relationship to horses is defined spatially by the ring and by its
use in the touring tent-circus. Mullett (2005), asserts that the ring is used
“metaphorically to define the difference between the traditional circus and
the new circus, or to mark argument about the definition of circus which
emerged in the 1970s” (pg. 32). The idea of the inside and outside of the
circle recalls notions of borders and spaces located on the edge. Spaces that
construct, embody and engage with otherness, or “activity on the periphery
challenging the status quo” (Mullett, pg. 32). New circus challenged the
tradition of the circus ring, and yet the convention of the ring facilitates
interaction between spectator and performer that is found in performance
spaces that encourage an informal relationship between the two. The
Famous uses the three-quarter round, as it uses tiny thrust stage or apron
stage, which extends into the audience, and this in turn has a circular raised
stage attached to it. This shape enables all spectators to see the action, to
have more direct contact with the acts, one of the tenets of circus
performance (Mullett, 2005). It signals to the spectator that the performance
will not take place in one direction and will provide a “totality of patterned
behavior” (Schechner, 1977, pg. 146). This interactivity extends offstage at ‘The Famous’ as the spectators are also surrounded by performers who take their tickets etc., and to add more complexity, all participants are surrounded by the mirrors that reflect the multi-layered interaction /performance of otherness on stage and off.
Postmodern performance and spectacle: Spectating self

Aside from Peta Tait’s extensive research, there is limited performance analysis of the genre of new-circus/cabaret meeting in shows like *La Clique*. Tait has extensively researched the sensorial experience of the spectator viewing new-circus performance. She argues that performances by “live bodies” can be deemed texts, and her research examines performance that displays physical skill and spectacle to interrogate audience experience, or as she refers to it, the reception of the “fleshed phenomenologies” of performing bodies (Tait, 2000, p. 4). Tait observes, “Some of the most intriguing and innovative postmodern physical theatre in Australia has developed around the concept of physicalising contacts between bodies as sexual” (Tait, 1998, p. 219). The work is postmodern not because it refuses narrative, but because it uses symbolic, visual and visceral narratives that challenge ideas about sexuality, queerness and desire (Tait, 2000). Not all of the performers in *La Clique* are aerial artists, but draw on aspects of new circus subverting concepts of identity and sexuality.

There are several companies in Australia who draw on new circus and physical theatre to re-construct circus and cabaret. Currently new circus companies in Australia of note include *The Burlesque Hour, The Candy Butcher’s, Rock’n’Roll Circus* (now *Circa*), and *Circus Monoxide*. Previously companies of note such as *Club Swing* (now defunct) and *Rock n Roll* created shows with content for an adult audience only. *The Candy*
*Butchers* are an example of new circus and cabaret that includes ‘burlesque, carnivalesque performance aesthetics’ combined with acrobatics, balancing acts and aerial duo routines (Tait, 2007, p. 84). In *Club Swing* and *Rock ‘n’ Roll Circus* the aerial body focused on queer identity and the “politics of underlying violence in circus” (Tait, 2007, p.84). *Rock ‘n’ Roll Circus*, was a Brisbane based new circus company that established a reputation for staging provocative, energetic and sexual performances in the late 1990s (Parr, 2001). *Rock n Roll* utilised the interactive genre of physical theatre to blur demarcations between, “…body and body, human and apparatus, sexual and non-sexual, desires and anxieties, and straight and queer” (Parr, 2001, p. 94).

Tait interrogates the interaction between the performer’s body and the apparatus such as aerial hoop, trapeze and tissue in her analysis of new circus as a genre that is preoccupied with “sexed bodies”. The sexual circus immerses the spectators into a “post-modern world of the potentialities of sexual desire” (1998, p.220). Part of the paradoxical allure of circus for performers and spectators is the thrill of the shared experience of the spectacle whereby childhood innocence collides with sexually alluring images and physicality.

The tradition of staging ‘sexual circus’ in Australia established by *Rock ‘n’ Roll* is self-consciously exploited in *La Clique* and by other companies such as *Club Swing, The Candy Butchers* and *The Burlesque*

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*The Candy Butchers*, black comedy *A Circus Sweetmeat*, won the Most Outstanding Production Award at the 2004 Melbourne Fringe festival.
Hour who have succeeded in “…exploiting physical theatre’s potential for reconfiguring theatre itself as space of desire. In this space eroticism, pleasures, sexual acts, and possibilities circulate with desires, not explicitly sexualized, but the distinctions become inoperative” (Parr, 2001, p. 95). Positioning new circus/cabaret/theatre as performances that reconfigure theatre as ‘spaces of desire’ contributes to my reading of the way spectacular acts inform the relationship between performing and spectating.

Tait observes that the social distinctions of identity have become “bodily blurred” in circus as it reflexively constructs and reconstructs itself in modern contexts (Tait, 1998 p.139). For example, the contortionist is no longer the freak displayed in a cage; he plays the role of ‘the freak’ as a frame through which to highlight his humanness, an echo of a past idea of culture reframed through new circus. In 20th century circus there has been a conflation between traditional circus and sideshow identities that ‘queer’ unconventional notions of gender and sexuality, and this identity operates beyond the spatial realm of the circus ring (Tait, 2005, p. 138). By viewing human bodies playing/displaying self through patterned behaviour, dangerous acts and costuming, the boundary between playing and perceiving is disrupted. If the freak has become human, performing rather than being ‘exhibited’, as Carmeli supposes, then the boundaries between what it is to be human have been transgressed by circus performance (Carmeli, 2001). Carmeli argues that this play on self distances (my emphasis) the spectator from the performers. He argues that the spectator’s, in their circus gaze, view the performer ‘as if’ the real person is absent. Their real self has been subsumed by the spectators viewing of them as other, part of “an illusion of history, of collective and personal biography”
My research into new circus and the blurring of role that occurs in ‘The Famous’ expands this idea drawing on consumer culture theory. In La Clique the ‘self-distancing’ has evolved toward a blurring of distance between the performer and spectator and this occurs via performative interaction. I argue that at ‘The Famous’, the ‘other’ world of the circus is opened to include the spectators in the co-creation of the spiegeltent narrative. The concept of the boundary open encounter (Mari & Poggesi, 2013), taken from consumer culture theory emerges here. The boundary open encounter creates feeling of friendship and connectedness to community in immersive service environments. The performative style of communication combined with the frame of the tent within the Fringe festival opens up a pathway for participants to connect with otherness in what I argue is a meaningful way. The spectator does not remain separate from the performer onstage doing spectacular acts. Not only are they close to the action on stage; they are also interacting with the other performers (such as the ushers and bar staff) off stage in a performative way. As Producer Brett Haylock explained in the interviews (Appendix 2), the experience of La Clique at ‘The Famous’ starts at the door of the tent and the goal is for performers and spectators to feel included. Paradoxically all are included in an exclusive environment of otherness. The performers welcome spectators with an informal familiarity ‘as if’ they know them and the informal communication helps establish the playful frame, and the ‘performance’ by both spectators and the house staff is assumed rather than rehearsed. When the spectator agrees to the ‘as if’ established by the ‘performers’ at the door, a blurring of the roles between performing and spectating begins. When interaction between service providers and
consumers within a well framed environment occurs over an extended period of time, is informal and conversational, Arnould, Price and Tierney (2006) argue that it has the potential to become meaningful. They argue that in immersive environments that use boundary open encounters, relationships form between those delivering and those receiving the service, these concepts are analysed in depth in Chapter Six. In this section I am returning performative concepts used in consumer culture theory to performance theory to argue that the boundary open encounters at ‘The Famous’ extends the experience of other to the space off stage. At ‘The Famous’ people are shown to their seats and served drinks off stage and those delivering the service ‘perform’ their roles. The spectators respond performatively, as keyed by the performers and the blurring of role begins. I argue that the blurring of circus with theatrical genres such as cabaret has contributed to a shift in the interactions between spectators and performers. The hierarchy that separates performers from spectators has transformed to include the other rather than exclude. The spatial and communicative frame activates the blurring of role. The frame of the cabaret/circus La Clique performed in ‘The Famous’ is an example of how roles are blurred and distance is collapsed. As discussed in the previous section on cabaret and frame, the role of the cabaret Emcee engages spectators to respond to the keys offered to them to interact. The interaction becomes a partial performance as the spectator transforms from passive spectator to performative participant. This change is partly facilitated by spectacle. Parr (2001) argues that plot is often secondary in physical theatre, and that the connection generated between object and human is primary and eliminates the dominance of the ‘rules’ of traditional theatre. He explains that, “…
bodies constantly move, tumble, twist, and swing in space, engaging and colliding with other bodies and various objects during the display of unusual and extraordinary feats…” (p. 96). As in other new circus performances that use spectacle, the acts featured in La Clique are connected to feats of skill and physical prowess “unperformable (and perhaps unimagined) by most of the audience” (Parr, 2001, p. 96). In A Tent and A Show Haylock describes La Clique, as a “Circus for adults” (Appendix, Haylock, personal communication, 2009), the space of the theatre blurred with cabaret, vaudeville and burlesque is an exemplar of theatre reconfigured as a space for desire. The performance of desire is framed by otherness, that shocks and thrills in a visceral and sensorial way. The performance of otherness using spectacle is heightened in this environment due to David Bates’ utilisation of spectacle in an intimate, small-scale space akin to modern cabaret. Journalist and Arts blogger, Patrick Hussey (2009) emphasises the experience of otherness that the performers embody by transgressing the physical and psychological limits of the body:

Something about that sense of La Clique being a missile not just from the fringes of the performing arts but also of society seems crucial. To the public La Clique’s performers must seem like super heroes. They fly, they swallow metal, they strip without shame. They represent, perhaps subliminally, the triumph of the Alternative. They represent not just the dysfunctional cache of the counterculture but show it can be fused with triumphal, mainstream success. (n.p)

Hussey’s hyperbolic review calls attention to collapsed boundaries between high and low art that distinguish cabaret and new circus, and to the emphasis on the body as the site through which otherness is performed.
Due to the limited critical analysis of new circus I made a research documentary from the interviews (Appendix and Appendix 2) about *La Clique* at ‘The Famous’ as a creative practice-based method through which to analyse its influence on spectator/performer relations. The method I used to expand my understanding of my experience of transgression and otherness as a spectator developed through the process of editing the research documentary through a series of cuts – rough cut, cut one–four and final cut. Hussey’s description of *La Clique* recalls mine. I was entertained by the high skill and charmed by the chaotic, playfulness, but was the experience transgressive? The ideas of spectacle and desire performed in an ‘intimate’ space were repeatedly mentioned in the interviews I conducted with performers, directors and producers. This led me to investigate why the otherness performed at ‘The Famous’ seemed to include the spectators and what relationship otherness had to transgression. My analysis of the interviews revealed that the performance of difference did not separate the performers from the spectators; the performance of difference became an inclusive device. The intimacy of the space and the style of performance using conventions of popular entertainments facilitated a sense of community amongst participants that included them in the ‘other’ ‘world’ of the circus. The Age critic Paul Edwards (2005) describes the performers as follows:

the people in *La Clique* all have this element of danger and confrontation …you can watch them a couple of times and still not believe what you are seeing. It’s a bit like a dreamy sequence in Philippe Genty or Cirque du Soleil, but you are closer to the action (n.p)
Being closer to the action created a more direct experience with the act, but also with the performer who, using role distance commentated on their performance. This ironic commentary included the spectator as in alternative cabaret. I apply Edwards description of the cabaret/circus performers in La Clique at ‘The Famous’ ‘dreamy’ as an example of an–other space of performance co-created by the performative interaction between performers and spectators. The dreamy space is both real and unreal and evokes Foucault’s heterotopic dimension discussed in Chapters One, Five and Six.

_Circus Oz_ uses new circus and cabaret, merging it with high-octane, character driven approaches to performance that include circus and spectacle for adults and children. The Melbourne based company formed in 1977 by combining _Soap Box_\footnote{“Soapbox Circus, a roadshow set up by the Australian Performing Group (APG) in 1976, and the New Ensemble Circus, a continuation of the New Circus, established in Adelaide in 1974. Between them these two groups had performed over seven hundred times to an audience of more than 300,000” (Hawkes, 2012, p. 1).} and _New Circus_ two successful theatre groups amalgamated to form a company that used circus and cabaret as a vehicle to create political theatre. These groups came from ‘The Golden Age in Australian Theatre’; that of the ‘New Wave’ in the 1970s whereby a distinctly male, Australian vernacular exploded into theatres from the headquarters of The Australian Performing group at The Pram Factory in Melbourne (Milne, 2004). Jon Hawkes (2012) describes its essence:

While Circus Oz is more circus than it is anything else, it simultaneously embraces and argues with a range of traditions and
forms, all at the same time: circus itself, music hall, cabaret, variety, popular music, knockabout comedy, movement, visual and music theatre and physical performance. (p. 3)

In some ways *La Clique* embodies the same energy and spirit found in *Circus Oz* whereby theatre collides with popular approaches to entertainment in venues associated with ‘difference’ such as the circus tent.

It may be this polymorphic artistic perversity that has led many commentators to describe *Circus Oz* as being apart from, or contrary to, the circus tradition. Other factors may also contribute to this perception: the predilection to performing in venues other than big tops (Hawkes, 2012).

I interviewed Artistic Director of *Circus Oz*, Mike Finch for my research documentary (Appendix), and he argues that the frame of the environment is what creates and enhances the experience for spectators at ‘The Famous’. Finch argues that the aesthetic of the ‘The Famous’ and the performative interaction between performers and spectators is a key aspect of the experience beyond the performance. Some parallels can be drawn between *Circus Oz* and the company who travel with the ‘The Famous’; both use the form of cabaret/circus, and both occupy a set-up influenced by traditional circus and fairground traditions. However, Finch observes that Tait’s assertion that new-circus succeeds because of the interrelationship between performers onstage is not applicable to *La Clique*. The cast of *Circus Oz* is made up of 12 performers and musicians, and the company develops annual shows usually themed around issues pertaining to social justice. They use circus skills to frame their commentary on each issue and attract a large theatre going audience.
Finch explains that the company model for La Clique is fundamentally different from the ensemble model of creation used by Circus Oz. La Clique programmes between 7-8 independent acts that use a range of circus and cabaret skills combined with an Emcee who introduces the acts to recorded music. The independence of the solo artist developing work through devised improvisation, therefore less dependent on the artistic vision of traditional circus, is according to Tait “less formulaic” (2005, p. 137). However, Bates asserts that versatility is the strength of the ensemble in La Clique arguing when interviewed, that the acts, “… could comfortably fit into Cirque du Soleil or The Olympic Games” (Appendix 2, Bates, Personal Communication, 2009).

Distinguishing differences between the company model of Circus Oz and La Clique at ‘The Famous’ led me to question whether the spectator/performer experience differed in different spaces or frames. By re-examining the footage of my research documentary I was able to expand my understanding of transgression at ‘The Famous’ in two ways by investigating: a) the impact if intimacy within the space and b) the performer/spectator dynamics. If as Finch proposed, the frame is why the spectator’s open and engage with the performers so readily, then what effect did this have on the performers? As established in the previous section of cabaret, the interaction on and offstage between performers and spectator uses performance as mode of playing or communicating. At ‘The Famous’ the boundary open encounter between performers and spectators uses play or patterned behaviour as the communicative frame, and this is what creates the sense of connectedness. Lehmann emphasises the current importance of the relationship between the audience in the context of postmodern
performance, referring to this as “a shift of axis from dialogue within theatre to dialogue between theatre and audience” (Lehmann cited by M. Hamilton, 2005, p. 20; Lehmann, 1997). Lehmann argues that the binary Aristotle initiated between spectacle and art has been disrupted by contemporary forms of performance that re-configure the role of the spectator from passive witness to active participant and this is embedded in the reconstructed cabaret at ‘The Famous’.

During the process of cutting my research documentary the importance of the mirrors lining the interior of the tent emerged. The mirrored interior of the tent helped me expand the relationship between spectacle and new circus/cabaret at the tent to include ‘seeing’ alongside ‘being’ and ‘doing’ (Schechner, 2003). Participants not only see themselves reflected in the mirror, the performative construction of identity through situated practice enables participants to embody a partial version of self as other. By embodying the partial role of the performer or partial spectator, participants experience themselves as someone else, as other. This reflexive experience opens up participants to a deepened experience of otherness by blurring the lines between being and doing. The partial performance of other facilitated by the blurring of role is witnessed in the other space of the mirror as an-other performance in an-other space. The transformation is reflected back to the participants who see themselves in the other and as the other. This collapses distance between performing and spectating, creating a temporary sense of community that is unifying and meaningful and evokes Turner’s notion of *communitas* (Turner, 1969). *Communitas* is the experience of community facilitated by shared experience and in this
context the shared experience is constituted through and by performances that emphasise and celebrate otherness.

At ‘The Famous’ the use of spectacle in new circus/cabaret is also enhanced by the intimacy of the space. Spectators can see and almost reach out and touch the artist as they perform “…unimaginable” feats of strength and skill (Parr, 2001, p. 96). This prompts a visceral reaction from the spectators such as gasps, applause and cheers as in traditional spectacular circus performance. This performative response facilitates a transformation for the performer, who adopts the partial role of spectating on the performance of the spectator enjoying the spectacle of their act. The proximity of performance at ‘The Famous’ enhances the connection to the ‘other’ on and offstage. In my interview with, David Bates for my research documentary he reiterates, “You can see the sweat on the brows of the performers”, and “Everybody wants to sit in the front row at La Clique…” (Appendix 2), highlighting the significance of proximity has on participants experience at ‘The Famous’.

In conclusion I argue that ‘The Famous’ is a theatre space reconstructed as a space for desire connected to the desire for otherness. Desire is produced, marketed, performed and consumed in a complex manner spatially and performatively at ‘The Famous’. Located within the Fringe festival space, it reconstructs and subverts tropes of traditional circus to interact with otherness and spectacle in a postmodern context. The performance of difference blurs genres drawn from popular entertainments that transgress societal norms. The desire to experience otherness is embodied via the partial adoption of the role of the other through the blurring of role. In the language of consumer culture studies they consume
each other’s performance – they co-produce and co-consume the experience – they partially-produce and partially-consume the experience. While the literature and logic of production for the theatre of all types addresses the key / frame / patterns that engage the spectator in the performance, my research uncovers another form of engagement – the transgression of performer into spectator. They too are watching a version of themselves embodied by the transformation of the spectator. In rare events the combination of the performative frame of play within the ‘othered’ space of the Fringe and the tent combined creates meaningful and symbolic experience. This happens via the blurring of role between performing and spectating. I argue that this transgression toward otherness collapses rather than enhances ideas of otherness.
This chapter discusses the creative methods and methodologies I used by mobilizing the interview data into research documentary to analyse the relationship between performance and transgression at ‘The Famous’. Matthew Reason (2006) emphasises the importance of clarifying the form and purpose of the documentation of live performance as this implicates its use and value. Reason’s emphasis on the clarification of form and purpose was a significant factor in determining how my research documentary (Appendix) would be used as the object and method of my research. Sarah Pink argues for visual representation, asserting that its ethnographic nature is contextual, that it relates to not only the way it is seen but also how it is filmed and by whom (Pink, 2004). My research documentary demonstrates an autobiographical approach to performance ethnography. It does not intend to be an exact or ‘truthful’ re-presentation of my actual experience or of the performances in La Clique, rather it is a carefully re-constructed version of my experience, measured against the opinions, feelings, and experiences of the research participants. Initially I wanted to ‘represent’ the atmosphere I experienced at the tent by recreating the aesthetic of the tent and discussing the acts with the owner, producer and performers. During a series of four cuts I came to understand Bruzzi’s interpretation of performative documentary as a reconstruction of the “dialectical relationship between the event and its representation” (Bruzzi, 2000, p. 14).

12 The research documentary is located in DVD format in Appendix 2.
To gather data I conducted a series of one-hour, semi-structured in-depth interviews during Sydney Festival in 2008 and the follow-up interviews were recorded at Melbourne Comedy Festival in 2009, there were also some follow-up conversations conducted via email with the Creative producer and owner. I also spent two weeks with the crew and performers at the tent in 2006, at Adelaide Fringe Festival, before embarking upon the data-gathering phase of research. Of the twelve interviewed, ten are featured in the research documentary. Subsequently all of the interviews were time-coded as a method through which to identify recurring words, themes or responses to interview questions. Excerpts from these interviews featuring what I identified as key words were then assembled into a rough cut. The identification of key words informed how I proceeded to code my analysis from genre analysis to theoretical discussion. The key words taken from interviews and used in the construction of the documentary, and for subsequent analysis included: authentic, 1920s, cabaret, vaudeville, burlesque, circus, Fringe, ‘carnie’, nostalgic, frame, high and low art, carnival and play. Phrases that were applied for analysis included; ‘the experience starts at the door’ and ‘spiegel aesthetic’.

Following this I wrote eight drafts of a script to base the next four cuts of the film around, after the first cut this script was abandoned and the editing process focused on themes. These themes were genre, transgression, space and aesthetics, and this informed the trajectory of the reading. I assert that this method enables my experience to be viewed as part of scholarly discourse about the theatrical event, re-constructed through the memories of those who were, and in some cases continue to be, part of its existence. As
Sauter explains “on the one hand, events become memories for those who participated; on the other, memories also become a kind of “experience” or collective awareness for those who have only heard or read about them…” (2000, pg. 252). By gathering the interview data together into a narrative form, the ‘collective memory’ of ‘spiegeltent performance’ becomes part of discourse.

It took some time for me to understand that I was documenting a version of my experience of the live performance as a method to identify and categorise it for the purpose of analysis, rather than a record of the live performance. Making sense of my experience as a spectator and researcher involved a series of inter-related and complex research practices that evolved over a significant period of time. After filming interviews with the performers I planned to create a conventional documentary about La Clique at the tent. However, what began as an aesthetically driven project about the acts and the spectators, slowly transformed into a document used to reconstruct and make meaning about the spectator/performer interaction that I experienced offstage. The use of visual images and recorded interviews edited together became a concrete way through which I could interpret my visit to the tent at Adelaide Fringe in 2006, using data to generate data to analyse. I used the methodologies of visual and performance ethnography to analyse the process of making meaning using the practice-based method of performative documentary. Influenced by Butler’s theory of performativity, Bruzzi argues that performative ideas have come to dominate documentary making as art form, and that documentary should be now viewed as a ‘performative act’ (Bruzzi, 2000, p. 2). The process of understanding the documentary as research about the context of the theatrical event, and the
performativity of the spectators and house crew, and not about the act of performance, was organic and dialogic. Concepts applied from performance ethnography, including aesthetics, performance, and performativity were used to interpret the ‘reality’ represented, as Bruzzi explains, concepts of representation and reality in documentary can only ever represent a version of reality, “… the reality represented [in documentary] does not have to be synonymous with the reality that preceded it” (Bruzzi, 2000, p. 5). The documentary continued to evolve throughout the research process, as my understanding of the interviewee response evolved. It’s meaning was “… Fluid and stems from a productive, dialectical relationship between the text, the reality it represents and the spectator” (Bruzzi, p. 7). This links to the frameworks of visual and performance ethnography, which I used as methodologies because they illustrate, “a process creating and representing knowledge” and remain “loyal to context and intersubjectivities through which the knowledge was produced” (Pink, 2007, p.22).

Performance ethnography focuses on embodiment as an aspect that informs analysis of culture and demonstrates a, “scholarly engagement and a critical, interventionist commitment to theory in/as practice” (Hamera, 2013, p. 213). In my study I use the idea of performance and constructing a performance to “tease apart phenomena not normally thought of in these terms” (p. 213), specifically the relationship between performers and spectators \textit{off stage}. I do this by examining the use of theatrical contexts in which the performance rituals such as costume role-play and the ‘spontaneous’ interactions that occur on and off stage between performers and spectators occur. Performance ethnography is interdisciplinary and integrates embodied knowledge, conceptual knowledge and technical
knowledge from specific areas related to performance. Conquergood drawing on Marcus, asserts that ethnography consciously seeks the unfamiliar, the world of otherness to bring, “…insights from the periphery back to the centre to raise havoc with our settled ways of thinking and conceptualisation” (Conquergood citing Marcus, 1991, p. 213). Discovering that ethnography itself seeks concepts of otherness to unsettle ways of thinking resonated for me as I transgressed the roles between reading and writing about performance and using what I call the ‘creative’ skills of my practice, the editing of the research documentary. By reading outside the familiar discipline of performance studies, I was able to reflexively look back at my experience of performance at the tent, retrieve performative concepts and reapply them with new insights.

Hamera and Madison discuss the idea of “doing critical theory” whereby the combination of the embodied practitioner/researcher ignites during the investigation through the research methods and processes applied during and after the studio inquiry. As Madison asserts, it is in the doing that the researcher can discover not only what is and who is, but also what may be (Madison & Hamera, 2005, p. 209). Hamera argues that the methodological infrastructure of performance ethnography is reliant on “keywords, formative figures, and key questions that also make community possible” (2013, p. 319). Keywords provide the “conceptual infrastructure” and “interpretive criteria” (2013, p. 319) needed to define and refine generative research using performance ethnography. There are several important keywords, but Hamera asserts that the following are essential: Performance, performativity, ethnography and aesthetics. Concepts of performance and performativity were investigated in Chapter One, and ethnography in the previous section, and I now briefly revisit them in relation to performance ethnography and aesthetics. Performance ethnographers interpret performance broadly, using it as a means to examine the expressive aspects of culture from multiple material and sensorial perspectives. Performance is wide-ranging term pertaining to work
produced in theatrical settings, to rituals of politics and power and everyday life practices such as conversations. Performance ethnography differs from traditional ethnography for it expands the how and why applied to the research participants experience and expressions to include the site about which, and within which they express themselves. Hamera describes performance both as “an event and a heuristic tool” to use for the understanding of culture (Hamera, 2013, p. 319). Performance ethnography acknowledges the positionality of the subjects and the researcher, interweaving complex practices of analysis between text, performance, practice, and concepts of embodiment. Butler’s assertion that identity is a state of becoming that is created by a series of utterances or repetitive acts that become normalised and stabilised over time is central to performance ethnography. Applying performativity to an act of performance, (such as the performance between spectators and performers at ‘The Famous’), broadens it to include an enriched analysis of embodiment drawn from the genealogy of the performance itself. The analysis of the genres of new circus, vaudeville, burlesque and cabaret and their interaction with transgression revealed the performativity - the performance of identity - by the offstage crew and how it influences the staging of experience. Analyzing the surrounding contexts using the interpretive notion of performativity deepens the understanding of the culture studied, the practices that make culture and how these practices shape the style, and emotional meaning of social interactions. If the observer creates structures of meaning through performative utterances, then potentially, can the idea of partial experience, as discussed in Chapter One, be applied to the performance of identity between performers and spectators as they shift toward an experience of otherness?

The multi-focal environment encourages participants to temporarily adopt gestures that signal their willingness to participate, becoming cultural actors. This partial adoption of the ‘circus-identity’, the repetition of gestures might ‘restore’ and frame the experience of the staging of performance for spectators and performers as transgression via the blurring of role. At ‘The Famous’ the dynamic interchange between performers and spectators sets up a temporary experience of community and connection for participants drawn from a curiosity about the ‘other’. This ‘other’
performance is the interplay that occurs informally and organically framed by the aesthetic identity of the ‘The Famous’.

The performers in La Clique embody the ‘texts’ they perform which blur boundaries between the being of the circus traveller and the ‘doing’ of their lives through performance. Similarly, the display of identity, expressed, (performed) through the language and ‘costume’ employed by the crew and house staff is influenced by the genres, (the ‘texts’) in La Clique. I argue that the off-stage performers are also engaging in a similar blurring of role to enact identity, between their ‘actual’ role, which is to serve drinks, take tickets etc., and their role as a ‘circus-identity’. The performances reflect more than the content of the acts, they include representations of a style of being in the world that continues off stage as ‘spiegeltent performance’. Therefore, performativity and spiegeltent performance interacts deeply with aesthetics in terms of understanding how the culture at the tent perceives itself.

Hamera (2013) asserts that performance ethnography has deep roots in the creative arts and defines aesthetics in performance ethnography as the “criteria and implicit social contracts that shape how performance and performative repetitions are perceived and understood” (p. 320). Often the concept of aesthetics is understood as the study and interpretation of the properties of fine-arts, however in performance ethnography Hamera argues, it is useful to think of aesthetics as “ sets of interpretive and expressive strategies to be interrogated, deployed or resisted”, ones that are by no means elite” (p. 320). Therefore aesthetics used as an interpretive strategy influences the way in research is defined and refined in multiple ways: they organise how performance ethnographers ‘stage’ research, they frame the mode of communication, illustrate concepts of identity and community, and unify members of a community. Hamera emphasises that it is crucial for the performance ethnographer to apply complexity to the research of aesthetics in the researchers chosen field, because the nuances
associated with style, taste, dress, speech for example are inseparable from lived experience. By investigating the aesthetic genres, techniques and tastes of the site of the research, and identifying the aesthetic conventions that frame it the performance ethnographer ensures rigour. For as Hamera asserts, “the research process itself, whether qualitative or quantitative is organised by aesthetic conventions” (Hamera, 2013).

My primary focus when editing the rough cut, first and second cut was ‘representing’ the aesthetic environment of the tent. I wanted to evoke the material aesthetic of the tent, the social context of the interactions between performers and spectators, the mode of dress adopted by the staff, and the historical background of the performances. The aesthetic of the space impacted on me significantly and the recorded interviews contained many references to the ‘aesthetic of the tent’ and ‘the Spiegel aesthetic’. I describe the tent’s aesthetics in the introduction of my thesis and in the images used in the opening sequence of my research documentary, and in discussion with the interviewees featured (see Appendix 2). Much later in my research I was able to discuss how and why the spatial aesthetic affects and informs the performative dynamic experienced between performers and spectators. In the analysis of my research documentary, in Chapter Six, I describe why the performative aesthetic embodied by participants contributes to Turner’s concept of communitas or shared experience at ‘The Famous’. I also analyse the embodiment of the aesthetic culture by participants at the tent and discuss why this contributes to the communal identity of those who travel with and visit the tent and temporarily become ‘other’.

Hamera argues aesthetics help performance ethnographers ‘stage’ their work (2013, p. 212), and this links to performative documentary
whereby the reconstruction of the experience of the researcher is presented for interpretation. It is ‘staging’ because it is a subjective interpretation. The research documentary stages an aesthetically driven performative reconstruction of the interview data as a product and as data to be analysed - it also functions as an aesthetically driven experience of performance in its own right.

The rationale for choosing visual research methods such as performance ethnography enabled my research to embody a performative dimension that emerged from what Barrett refers to as “aesthetic logic” (Barrett & Bolt, 2007). Even though I am applying Barrett’s use of descriptors for practice-led performance. As emphasized in the introduction I applying a new approach to practice-based methods, by using creative practice to treat data for analysis, expanding the conventional understanding of practice-led research and its application in Drama, Theatre and Performance studies. My research process is organised by aesthetic conventions, for example which documentary techniques I have used to stage my research documentary. The footage of the interviews, and the footage of the tent’s exterior and interior shaped my aesthetic logic and therefore my interpretation of the spectator/performer interactions.).

Hamera argues that the ethnographer and the performer embody the liminal realm, “the ethnographer is not a “native” just as a performer was not the character” (Hamera, 2013, p. 212). However, I am “not-not” the “native/performer” either. I sit in the space of other; I am something else, another self, transitioning between the roles of the observer, participant and analyst. Therefore, I sit on the cusp, in a liminal world that includes the reflexive world of the researcher and the intuitive world of the
performer/practitioner. By necessity these worlds overlap, are fluid and context driven. I am enacting the research moving beyond the written realm toward the embodied realm, and in the “doing” the research is “becoming”. My practice-based performance ethnography is a tool of knowledge production that Madison refers to as co-performance. My co-performance embodies my experience as expressed through the symbol-making practices of the research participants and it seeks “a doing” of experience to represent broader experiences of culture (Madison & Hamera, 2005, p. 168).

The literature regarding visual ethnography from the 1990s in the disciplines of social science, anthropology, sociology and cultural studies argues that visual research has “transformative potential” for the analysis of culture, self-identity, memory and social science (Pink, 2007, p. 17). The transformative aspect the staging of spiegeltent performance experience at ‘The Famous’ was revealed. During each cut I categorised concepts and experimented with aesthetic techniques, (such as jump cuts, split screen images and montages), and this method helped research questions to emerge. Each iteration refined my understanding of the following: The genres of performance in La Clique and how they impacts on the behaviour of the staff at the door, the performers travelling with the tent, the spectator’s experience of the tent and the aesthetic of the tent and the relationship between performing spectating, otherness and transgression.

The first section of this chapter introduces developments in qualitative research over the past decade that acknowledge the value of using multiple methods in practice-led research. The second part of the chapter illustrates how new knowledge regarding transgression and otherness in performance emerged during the creative process.
Identity is always in part a narrative, always in part a kind of representation. It is always within representation. Identity is not something, which is formed outside, and then we tell stories about it. It is that which is narrated in one’s own self (Hall, 1993, p. 49).

Discussions around self and identity in research have increased in the humanities and realms of performance theory since the post-modern or experimental era from 1990-1996 (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Questions concerning authorship and whether the qualitative researcher can ever successfully capture the lived experience of research participants and the way ‘lived experiences’ are represented are of central concern to ethnographers (Denzin, 1997). The emergence of a new research paradigm in the form of practice-led research alongside the evolution of qualitative methods of analysis has changed the perception of how knowledge can be produced in research. Scholarship concerned with creative practice has evolved over the past decade, and the emergence of practice-led research highlights the interrelationship between theory and practice for the arts practitioner. This is distinguishable by the “lived experience” the artistic practitioner brings to the research methodologically and conceptually (Barrett & Bolt, 2007, p. 1). ‘Old’ research methods have been reinvigorated alongside new approaches to practice-led research that reassert the idea that creative or artistic practice can robustly lead to the contribution and production of knowledge. Kershaw and Nicolson challenge traditional approaches to research in terms of method and methodology arguing that creative approaches to research disrupt long held approaches to, “capture, codify and categorise knowledge” (Kershaw & Nichollson, 2011, p. 2). Researchers of performance are challenging binaries that, “separate
embodiment and intuition from intellectual practices, emotional experiences and ways of knowing” (p. 2), by approaching research using artistic practice as a form of “generative inquiry” (Barrett, 2007, p.1). These practices, as indicated in Chapter One, are subjective, emergent and interdisciplinary. A number of terms are applied to creative arts research enquiry: “practice as research”, “practice-integrated research”, “studio research”, and in recent years “practice-led research”. These terms refer to a process that enables practitioners to explore research through artistic practice (Haseman, 2012). Haseman draws on Carole Gray’s definition of practice-led research, acknowledging that this has become the preferred term in creative arts practice. Gray explains practice-led research:

Firstly research which is initiated in practice, where questions, problems, challenges are identified and formed by the needs of practice and practitioner; and secondly, that the research strategy is carried out through practice, using predominantly methodologies and specific methods familiar to us as practitioners (Haseman citing Gray, 2012, p. 147).

The generation of new knowledge through artistic practice is complex for it is the methodological approach, the methods engaged during the studio enquiry and the resulting artifact that all contribute to the construction of new understandings of and contributions to the field of knowledge. The multi-disciplinary nature of performing arts has influenced my choice to use multiple methods adopting an “eclectic methodology” (Dixon, 2011, p. 43). Barrett and Bolt (2007) acknowledge the challenges facing creative researchers from multiple viewpoints. They argue despite recognition within curriculum and in the academy, suspicion pertaining to the legitimacy of intuitive and subjective practices and their personalized
dimension persists. Despite this, as Barrett argues, artistic practice as a mode of production has the potential to grow in significance philosophically and theoretically, as approaches to studio inquiry become more broadly understood as scholarly research.

Challenges facing the practice-led researcher include ensuring methodological rigour and critical distance from the methods engaged in during the studio inquiry to retain the focus of the research outcome. Clearly articulating the relationship between the methods and materials used and the object/artifact created is also of primary importance as this directly informs the research outcome. Hamilton (2011) refers to the ‘voices of the exegesis’ to illuminate the multiple perspectives that require acknowledgment by the practitioner/researcher. Finding the balance between creative practice and critical inquiry is a challenge I experienced during my process and led me to formulate a variation to this method, which involved using creative practice to treat the data. The difference being that I did not use the act of performance as the tool through which to analyse ‘spiegeltent performance’. I applied one creative practice to as set of data to create and then interpret another creative practice i.e. as established I used performative documentary techniques to mobilize the date into a research documentary to generate data. The product is a reconstruction of the context of the theatrical event-the ‘performance’ between spectators and performers. The process of cutting was the practice and using the framework of performance ethnography key concepts and themes were selected and then investigated theoretically. This process was the most reliable way to investigate my lived experience of performance as a practitioner of performance.
My ethnographic approach is reflexive and participatory and the use of written methods is of equal importance to the use of visual materials. The choice to incorporate multiple methods guided by a practice-led approach is influenced by Denzin’s descriptor of the qualitative researcher as bricoleur:

The researcher as bricoleur theorist works between and within competing and overlapping perspectives…is adept at performing a large number of diverse tasks, ranging from interviewing to intensive self-reflection and introspection. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 5)

Denzin highlights the importance of acknowledging the reflexive and subjective nature of the researcher’s perspective and experience as part of the process of researching, explaining, “The gendered, narrative bricoleur also knows that researchers all tell stories about the worlds they have studied” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 5). Denzin’s definition of qualitative research encompasses notions of improvisation and spontaneity that lead the researcher-as-bricoleur into a ‘flow’ space whereby diverse interpretive practices create something new. As a bricoleur I am operating as, “a Jack of all trades or a kind of professional do-it-yourself person” a “quilt-maker”, using the “aesthetic tools” of my creative practice alongside other methods and materials to construct the research narrative (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, pp. 4-6). The product of the bricoleur’s work is a complex fluid set of interconnected images, concepts and representations. Denzin likens the work of the researcher-as-bricoleur to the filmmaking technique of montage; an aesthetic practice that involves the juxtaposition of edited shots that jar the spectator to produce new insights. Montage was first used by Russian filmmakers Sergei Eisenstein and Dziga Vertov, who experimented with these techniques in their landmark films, Battleship Potemkin (Eisenstein, 1925) and The Man with a Movie Camera (Vertov, 1929). The original
images obscured potential understandings and montage uses sound, collage
and images to crystallize new meaning. Later in this chapter, in the section
titled *Mixing modes: From rough to second Cut*, I discuss how I used the
technique of montage as a means to create a new interpretation of my
experience of the performance of *La Clique* at ‘The Famous’.

Nelson argues that the choice of research methodologies depends on
“questions asked and the questions depend on their context” (Denzin &
Lincoln, 2008, p. 6). I started my process conducting video interviews with
performers, producers and Directors associated with circus/cabaret
performance in Australia, and who had an association directly with The
Famous Spiegeltent or *La Clique*. I knew all of the interviewees, and my
identity, (from their point of view) was, Kate Smith, comedic performing
artist and writer. My identity as performer and writer and the questions I
asked deeply influenced the outcomes of the interviews. It meant I was
given access to the ‘insiders’ from the tent, as I was perceived as ‘one of
them’. The interviews were candid and informal, and my presence behind
the camera (shooting and asking questions), encouraged a performative
element to the responses. At first, I was concerned the playful, performative
nature of the interviews masked the ‘reality’ of the experiences I was
interpreting. However, by the fourth cut I realized that of the dynamics at
play during the interviews were a significant clue guiding me to reconstruct
my understanding of transgression and performance at the tent.

My inexperience with video editing influenced how I approached the
cutting process: By this I mean I was slow, using repetition as a way in
which to learn the technical process, unexpectedly the repetition informed
my conceptual understanding of the images. My expertise as a writer and
performer influenced the visual narrative using my ‘insider’ knowledge to identify and refine concepts and themes that emerged.

**Constructing experience: Performative documentary as visual ethnography**

Rose emphasises that visual research has analytical and conceptual potential in terms of what these methods are able to achieve, “rather than what they inherently are” (2007, p.11). She makes an important distinction between methods applied to found images, (those that already exist), and those that are constructed, arguing that images must be examined within the social context in which they were constructed. The term Rose applies to the analysis of the cultural construction of visual images is the “scopic regime” (ibid, p.2), which is close to visuality. Visuality is distinct from vision, (the act of seeing), and both refer to the way in which vision is constructed in various ways. Who is seeing, how we see, what access there is to seeing or not pending on the framing and composition of an image or set of images (Rose citing Jenks 2007, p. 3; Jenks, 1995, pp.1-2). These terms speak to the way I constructed my research documentary as method to order and interpret my experience from the perspective of practitioner and researcher.

Rose proposes a framework that identifies three methods or ‘sites’ at which meanings of images are made (Rose, 2007, p. 13). The sites are of the production of the image (i.e. The Famous Spiegeltent), the site of the image itself, (the research documentary), and the site where it is seen, (in my research studio). Rose argues that each these sites has three aspects through which to interpret them. Rose refers to these as ‘modalities’. These modalities are applied to the image to analyse what is seen and how it is
seen as a cultural construction (2007, pp. 11,13, 16). The three modalities are: Technological, compositional and social (Rose, 2007, p. 13).

Technological refers to the apparatus used to enhance natural vision, in this case, a (video camera and Final Cut Pro editing programme). Compositional refers to specific material qualities of the image, colour, content, spatial configuration within an image. Social refers to the cultural context in which the image is produced and seen. I draw on Rose’s ‘sites’ to interpret the iterations of my research documentary. The boundaries between these sites are blurry and I have adapted Rose’s guidelines in approaching visual research using photography, to research using video. I am not examining my research documentary as a piece of art characteristic of the genre of avant-garde film and documentary, I am using these techniques to construct a piece of visual research to answer questions about the relationship between spectators and performers in cultural performance.

The discussion of my process cites the influence of editing techniques taken from Russian documentary filmmakers including Esther Shrub, Dziga Vertov and Sergei Eisenstein, avant-garde cinema and performative documentary practices. The compositional aspect of my research documentary used montage-editing techniques influenced by the ‘compilation film’ techniques of, Esther Shrub and Dziga Vertov (Bruzzi, 2000, p. 27).

Compilation film, a form of non-fiction film, sought to be “political, instructive, inspirational cinema” by juxtaposing pieces of reality to “achieve the effects of absurdity, pathos and grandeur” (2000, p.27). Vertov and Shrub used original archival footage and re-contextualised it to illustrate social injustice and class inequity. Their use of the compilation technique
sought to initiate historical and political debate, preserving archival footage and creating a fresh interpretive framework. They used the juxtaposition of images rather than a more traditional explication of images punctuated by voice over. Bruzzi argues that Shrub’s technique conforms to the tradition of, “dialectical, political filmmaking”, which hinges on the expressive use of filmmaking techniques, such as juxtaposing images and soundscapes (p. 27). The creative impulse to include the use of archival photographs and footage is how I constructed links between past and present incarnations of popular entertainments to create a continuum of performance. I used jump cuts and the repetition of images with discordant sound to draw attention to the images and disrupt the viewing experience, and then inserted a research question. I used this process as way to investigate the social aspects of my experience. This process also led me to identify and investigate the relationship between popular entertainments, carnival traditions, and Fringe festivals, turning my focus back to the theoretical relationship to transgression and space.

Bruzzi argues that it is important here to distinguish between ‘newsreel’ and ‘documentary’, the newsreel shows the events and “it is the function of the documentary to provide structure and meaning (Bruzzi, 2000, p. 27). These Soviet filmmakers became renowned for their use of juxtaposition and montage to invert the original meaning of newsreel footage. Their aim was to intercut archival footage with other images to offer fresh interpretive frameworks of historical and political events; remaining faithful to the assertion by the Soviet filmmakers that documentary filmmaking is to some degree the “creative treatment of actuality” (2000, p.28).
The techniques I used were influenced by these compilation techniques, as archival footage was intercut with other images to reinterpret my own experience. My aesthetic choice to use montage and juxtaposition emphasized the aesthetics of ‘The Famous’ and how this ‘other’ space framed an experience of otherness for the spectator. Using repetition and split screen techniques, my representation of the staff at the door emphasises their role in aiding the spectator to cross the threshold into the tent’s interior, to enter a heterotopic, immersive ‘world’. The ‘performer’ represented is the usher, collecting tickets and showing people to their seats. By watching the footage repeatedly I observed that Lorne Rawlings and Brett Haylock, (two of the staff featured in the documentary), ‘perform’ the action of inviting people to take their seats and invite the spectator to respond. They do this using a physical action; they tip their Trilby at the spectators as they arrive at the door to enter the space, they improvise their welcome speech, speaking directly to each person as they stamp their arm, and they do this in way that invites participation. Initially I wanted to show that the repetition of this act had an historical component, linked to American vaudeville. I was constructing a lineage of performance, representing how it had been reincarnated in a contemporary context. However, using spilt screen and repetition of dialogue revealed something else. I saw the repetition as an example of restored behaviour, they were ‘restoring’ performance from the past and creating new ones. I identified what they were doing as a performative style of management. Using Goffman’s concepts of keying and play, (Chapter Four), and Butler’s concept of performativity, (Chapter Two), I began to analyse how the performative action offstage affected the spectator experience alongside the
performance onstage. Drawing Schechner and Turner’s concepts of ritual in performance, the liminoid and shared experience, I discuss the moment that the spectator enters the tent as a ‘threshold crossing’ explaining it in the context of entering the world of ‘otherness’. I deconstruct the effect of the ‘threshold’ crossing moment in Chapter Six.

Rose’s ‘social modality’ was used to analyse the spectator/performer dynamics. This level of analysis did not emerge until the fourth cut of the research documentary. By that stage I had realized that as the researcher I was the audience/ I asked myself, “What does the construction of the research documentary reveal to me in the role of researcher about the social world at the tent?”

Rose discusses the use of photography as a method for research asserting that photographs used by social researchers are “simply a means to a certain ends” (Rose, 2007, p. 238). Drawing on Jenks, Rose asserts that Western culture is embedded with notions of seeing and consequently, “looking, seeing and knowing have become perilously intertwined” (Rose citing Jenks, 2007, p. 238). I deconstructed these intertwined concepts of seeing and this helped determine the research questions, and led me to “address questions and issues generated in a wide range of theoretical contexts” (p. 238). For example, after analyzing the genres I realized there was a gap in my knowledge. I had researched the historical perspective but had not clearly articulated the relationship that vaudeville, cabaret and circus had to transgression and otherness. It was the construction of the visual continuum of performance using still images, spliced with explanations of the style of performance at the tent by owner David Bates and Producer of La Clique Brett Haylock, which led me to broaden my
theoretical understanding. I identified another gap in my knowledge. I still had not answered my central question regarding my assertion that my experience at the tent was transgressive. I need to further investigate the social relationship between performing and spectating. I turned to anthropological theories of performance as ritual, and consumer culture theory to analyse the spectator/performer interactions in relation to authentic experience.

My theory of transgression aims to demonstrate a “set of well developed categories that are systematically interrelated though statements of relationship to form a theoretical framework that explains some phenomenon” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 55). I developed a set of categories to define the performative genres influencing the spectator/performer dynamics, (detailed in Chapters Three and Four). The idea of ‘high’ and ‘low’ concepts applied to the interpretation or ‘coding’ of research interviews is drawn from Corbin and Strauss’ (2007) conventional approach to interpreting qualitative research. Low concepts are descriptors used to locate the research within a particular field i.e. popular entertainments, Fringe and festival. I divided the footage into three broad categories to start with: The tent, the performance and the people. These terms evolved to become: the spatial, the performative and the social. I needed a thorough understanding of these concepts to ground my research and to clearly articulate my research area. Exploring these concepts also helped me locate my research in the field of performance studies, performance anthropology and consumer culture theory. Creating categories was the pathway I used to apply theoretical complexity to the dynamic at the tent recreated in the research documentary.
The theoretical concepts or high concepts that emerged from my research into the genres of vaudeville, circus, cabaret and burlesque were categorised in relationship to space and performance. I categorised the performance genres as popular entertainments. This led me to analyse the environments in which they were staged using the concept of spatial. This led me to investigate festival and Fringe culture. The concept of cultural performance deepened my understanding of the way the spatial environment informed the performative interaction between spectator and performers.

My theoretical stance draws on these categories and concepts and to investigate my experience of performance at the tent as a transgression toward otherness through the blurring of role between performing and spectating. My overarching explanatory concept is the act of performance transgression and how it has the potential to be experienced by both spectators and performers viewing and performing popular entertainments. By systematically categorizing the performative and spatial landscape at the tent, shifting between writing and video editing, I have attempted to answer the primary questions: The staging of acts always focuses on performances and performers. Why?

The staging of spectator experience is not well understood. Why?

The staging of acts for spectators always focuses on reception. Why?

The partial is transgressive. How?

Selecting and reconstructing the spectator responses to the performances on and offstage alongside the interviews helped me identify gaps in my understanding. I identified that spectators and performers were engaging on and offstage and that performance was the mode of
engagement, I still however needed to apply complexity to my assertion that
the performative communication involved transgression and otherness. I did
not uncover the idea of the blurring of role until cut two of the research
documentary. It was not until partway through cuts three and four that I
located ‘The Famous’ as an example of heterotopia and reinterpreted my
understanding of the aesthetic of the mirrors and why they contribute to
experience otherness and other space.

The mirrored interior of the tent reflects the performance of other back
to the participants. They see and perform a version of themselves that is not
their everyday self. This experience of an-other self dissolves boundaries
between seeing and doing via performative interaction. The transformative
experience of self is both a performance of other and an-other performance.

Both spectators and performers experience the blurring of role. In Chapter
Four and Six, I apply argue that ‘the partial experience’ of other is
transformative and that it contributes to the formation of a temporary
community or tribe, drawing on Turner’s concepts of ritual in performance,
*communitas* and liminoid experience introduced in Chapter One (Turner,
1969, 1982, 1990; Turner & Schechner, 1988). I also address the concept of
the tribe in the research documentary, using interviews to demonstrate how
the people who travel with the tent see themselves. Mikey Martens, Simon
Barfoot, Mike Finch, David Bates, Hamish McCormick and Brett Haylock,
Drew Fairley and Flick Ferdinando all referred to the tent as ‘authentic’ as
‘the experience’ as opposed to one that was a ‘copy’ of what they believed
they had created when interviewed Appendix 2). My investigation into of
‘authentic’ experience is what led me to the concept of ‘partial experience’
in consumer culture theory. This was when my research took on an inter-
disciplinary dimension beyond what I expected. My research into consumer culture theory was an important step in changing my perception of the spectator/performer dynamics beyond concepts of performance taken from performance studies. By discovering ‘partial experience’, I found a pathway to further interpret the blurring of role between performing and spectating. I would not have found this clue if I had not cut the interviews in such a way as to emphasize the use of the word ‘authentic’ by interviewees to describe the environment at the tent. Chapter Six also discusses the value of authenticity to spectators in immersive setting such as ‘The Famous’, and why this links to shared experience and the formation of community. In the next section I explore how researching the concept of ‘partial experience’ shifted my perception of my own role in the research. I discuss how my understanding of my roles began to blur and why this was of value to my understanding of the value of practice-led methods.

**A reflexive approach**

What are the strategies that I, the researcher/practitioner used to find critical distance to examine my work? What kind of analysis lends itself to research in a creative form? Heddon argues that autobiographical performance can assume authenticity through its use of the subjective ‘I’ and I am reflexively conscious that the ‘I’ in this story is a persuasive construction, designed to convince the reader of the value of my theory of transgression and the ‘partial experience’ of other. Because I ‘saw’ and ‘felt’ as a spectator, Heddon asserts that in autobiographical performance this can be interpreted as a “guarantor of truth”, the “I” becomes the evidence (Heddon, 2008, p. 26). To counter-act what can be perceived as a self-indulgent approach to research, I have attempted to represent ‘I’ from
multiple viewpoints in the video: the owner, the crew, the performers, other experts in circus and cabaret performance all interviewed for their view (Barrett, 1996). The multiplicity of ‘I’ provides some crystallization of the shared experience of participants pertaining to concepts of community, extending it beyond my understanding alone. Heddon (2008), citing feminist critic Joan W. Scott, also asserts:

> Experience is always an interpretation and always in need of an interpretation …mediated in language and by language, experience cannot be taken as some ‘pure’ knowledge or ‘truth’ about any subject, including the self. (p. 27)

The ‘I’ at the centre of the interpretation and expression of the research slips across into the “I” of the spectator and performing artist, suggesting a sense of slippage between concepts of identity and the authorial voice. The research documentary aims to embody specific aspects of my experience as a spectator and transfer them from the personal toward the generalised and back again as a means to mine the data and construct theory (Barrett, 1996).

By creating distance from my ‘split selves’, I am able to critically reflect on the experience of constructing the research and analyzing the research outcomes. My distancing of self, the writing about the self that experienced an event and its reconstruction in the research documentary is a “self that is not recorded but is rather made up” (Heddon citing Paul de Mann, 2008, p. 27). The texts I am using are dialogical; the texts/voices of the participants sit alongside the texts/voice of the author/researcher and come alive in the way they interact with each other.
Corbin and Strauss stress, “Research must locate the expressed emotions, feelings, experience and actions within the context in which they occurred so that meaning is clear and accurate” (2007, p. 57). However, in creative practice, the materials used in the studio inquiry also shaped the construction of my research documentary. I discovered it is not possible to faithfully recreate information in the context shared. It is the way I used the visual materials rather than the act of collecting and displaying the visual images, (the footage and archival photos used in my research documentary), that is significant (Prosser, 1998). The edited footage will always be a re-presentation of the original situation, a re-framing of experience to highlight aspects for analysis. Crucially the words of participants are not reframed in terms of meaning, but the very act of capturing a live situation on video renders its ‘liveness’ and therefore the context in which it was delivered (Reason, 2006).

My research sets up a complex relationship between the documentation of live performance for research and the documentation of performance. It does not seek to document liveness; it does intend to research it. Any mediated image is no longer live, therefore to actually represent live performance is impossible, as Phelan asserts, the ethnographic research video is a representation of live performance, yet in and of itself it too is a performance. I acknowledge Phelan’s criticism of the documentation of live performance as a form of appropriation that can distort meaning and works against the very nature of live performance (Auslander, 2008; Phelan & Lane, 1998). However, for the purposes of research, the video whilst removing the work from its original context, aims to closely examine the complex nature of the social interactions between the
spectators and the performers, not to review *La Clique* or analyse its acts. For this reason I chose not to include footage of the acts, instead I focused on re-constructing the interviews.

Denzin emphasises texts are easily created and contexts are not and part of the reflexive nature of my process is to acknowledge the contextual influences in the field and in the studio. The context in which the digitally recorded interviews were conducted influences participant responses and in turn, the research shaped by multiple constraints and choices. These include: the visibility and position of the participant in a tight knit industry; the artificial presence of the camera; the constructed nature of the questions; the timing of the interviews; the time constraints of those interviewed; the use of existing archival footage of the live performance and restrictions placed on using certain content, and the technical inexperience of the filmmaker/researcher. As Pink observes, with the camera always on display it is difficult to know in advance the way in which its presence may affect the desired outcome. The unknowable space of the developing narrative is where the knowledge emerges (Pink, 2001). It was in the unknowable space of narrative that my understanding of how to interpret my creative practice changed significantly as discussed in the introduction to this chapter. My perception of what documentary methods would reveal transformed from an interpretation of factual filmmaking to ethnographic research led by the performative practice of reconstructing my experience of performance.

**Mixing modes: from the rough cut to the second cut**

My research documentary changed significantly during the stages of the editing process: from the logging of footage, to rough-cut and
throughout four cuts to arrive at the final cut. The footage used in the rough-cut covered an enormous amount of territory including the historical background of the tent and its owner, an introduction to the concepts of popular entertainment, carnival and transgression, an excerpts of some of the acts in *La Clique*, interviews with the performers, a discussion about the aesthetics of the tent, as well as a discussion about the influence that the Australian owner and crew have on the culture of the tent and how it is perceived by spectators. The length of the film was approximately one hour and thirty-five minutes well over my estimated twenty-five minute goal. In order to ‘see’ what I had I abandoned the script and engaged in an organic and fluid approach to editing and reinterpreting the footage. The rough-cut became the backbone for my research and despite multiple cuts and the elimination of a significant amount of footage, the final cut remained relatively close to my original, intuitive assemblage of the footage.

Bill Nicholls (2001) argues that there are four compositional aspects to the documentary film: the first is showing, the second is telling, the third is the poetic form and the fourth is the voice. In the rough cut I used the ‘showing’ technique of constructing images from the ‘world’ of the tent including raw footage I had shot plus footage I obtained from documentary filmmaker Hamish McCormick (Appendix). McCormick specializes in the documentation of the work of street performers, circus, cabaret variety and burlesque artists and festival events throughout Australia with his company, *Carnival Cinema*. The footage I shot is participatory as I am present and interacting with the subjects, and the raw footage I gathered from Hamish is observational and participatory, whereby his presence as the cameraman is also made explicit. For example I have used one shot from his point of view...
that performatively positions him behind the camera as a spectator. The frame is a mid-shot of Lorne Rawlings, the front of house ‘performer’ collecting tickets. McCormick’s arm is stamped as he enters the tent.

Rawlings and McCormick engage in a role play for the camera, emphasising what Flick Ferdinando, (another research subject featured in *A Tent and A Show*), refers to as the “Total Barnum and Bailey”, aspect of the representation of the tent by its crew and cast (Appendix 2, Ferdinando, personal communication, 2009). I used the playful interaction between Rawlings and McCormick as an establishing shot to evoke the performative, nostalgic atmosphere of circus, staged for the spectators at the tent. I also used it to accentuate the presence of the filmmaker and the research participant’s willingness to perform for the camera. Bruzzi asserts, “…recent performative documentaries feature individuals who are performers and/or comfortable with the idea of performing on film” (2000, p. 190). This contrasts to earlier observational modes of the treatment of subjects, who, after long periods of exposure to filming become so used to the presence of the camera that they “potentially don’t notice” it anymore (2000, p. 190). The intrusive presence of the camera in the modern performative documentary is now a widely used by documentary filmmakers and accepted by subjects.

In line with the expository mode, in the first cut I sought to construct the story, voiced, and supported by the images, framed by a rhetorical argument. In line with Nicholls’ compositional modes of documentary I used the fourth aspect, (introduced earlier in this chapter), ‘the voice’, the mode to construct the story (2001, p. 94). Historically the oratory voice in the expository mode speaks about the historical world alongside a collection
of images supported by a logical narrative representing a particular perspective. This is demonstrated in early documentary such as Robert Flaherty’s *Nanook of The North* (1922), a yearlong ethnographic study of Inuit Eskimo in the Arctic Circle. The voice in my research documentary addressed the viewer directly with titles and a voice-over that recounted the history of the tent.

The voice of documentary evolved significantly with the work of the Soviet filmmakers, Dziga Vertov, Esther Shrub and Sergei Eisenstein. These filmmakers were interested in using a voice that represented the social world using the poetic assemblage of photographs reconstructed using specific editing techniques that focused on the “effect of the transitions between shots” (Nicholls, 2001, p. 95). Vertov called his technique, (which became an influential approach to documentary making), *Kino-Eye*. Vertov’s emphasis was on the film form and the, “…assembly of shots into a pattern that both disclosed less visible aspects of the world and affirmed the voice of the filmmaker” (Nicholls, 2001, p. 95). Nicholls asserts that this approach moved beyond Flaherty’s use of ‘attractions’ and scientific observation, whilst remaining faithful to the aim of representing the historical world. Vertov’s *Man With A Movie Camera* (1929) is also an early example of reflexive filmmaking whereby the subjective presence of the filmmaker is evident.

After watching *Man With A Movie Camera* (1929) several times, I changed my approach and decided I needed to include reflexive and poetic modes to construct my argument. I did not want to rely on my voice to explicate the images, I wanted the vibrancy of the tent to be represented using the techniques of montage and juxtaposition, and this choice became
the pathway through which I would find new ways of interpreting my experience as a spectator.

It was not until well into the second cut that I became aware that the inclusion of myself in the research documentary was not only reflexive, but also performative. As Nicholls (2000) explains:

A reflexive documentary can contain sizeable portions of observational or participatory footage; an expository documentary can include poetic or performative segments. The characteristics of each given mode function as a dominant in a given film: they give structure …but they do not dictate or determine every aspect of its organisation. (p. 100)

There are two important distinctions to be made in regards to the performative documentary, between those that involve the performance of the subjects and use highly stylized visual techniques, and films that are inherently performative, which feature the intrusive presence of the filmmaker (Bruzzi, 2000, pp. 185-186). When I became saturated by the images during the labour intensive process of editing the first cut, I continually returned to my research questions, revisiting the theoretical concepts. This dialogic process led to the decision to structure the first cut in ‘chapters’ that emulated the chapters of a ‘thesis’. I instinctively did to this foreground my dual presence as a researcher/filmmaker and spectator subjectively positioned within the film. At the time I did not know that my choice to use some of the Kino-Eye techniques of Vertov was an example of a reflexive and performative style of documentary making. I borrowed the opening sequence from Man With A Movie Camera (1929) to start each visual chapter. The sequence I chose features a close up of a pair of hands opening a theatre curtain, it cuts to a wide establishing shot of the interior of
a cinema or theatre and then cuts to a mid shot of empty theatre seats dropping down, as if by their own accord, ready for people to be seated. The transition between the seat shot and the next sequence is a dissolve to the research question which fades up over the seats, chosen to indicate time passing from past to present. It also reinforces my choice to emphasize the performative mode as the dominant aesthetic in the research documentary. I was attempting to reconstruct the dialectical relationship between the live performance and the mediated space of documentary. I repeated the curtain opening sequence at the start of each thematic ‘chapter’ in the research documentary to bookend discussions about different concepts such as the aesthetic of the tent, the performance of *La Clique* and a discussion about visual ethnography as a research methodology. The choice to include these techniques was influenced by a period of my research spent watching reflexive and compilation documentaries including, *Atomic Café* (Rafferty, 1982) and *The Thin Blue Line* (Morris, 1988). This exposure to documentary films that transgressed traditional perceptions regarding transparency and non-intervention in documentary influenced my intuitive use performative documentary methods (Bruzzi, 2000, p. 37). These methods priorities the use of subjectivity, and reinterpretation, juxtaposing interviews and archival footage.

Two things were lacking in the rough cut, a methodological understanding of the research process and a clear theoretical perspective. I knew the theoretical and methodological components were missing during the first cut. I had compiled a conventional observational documentary that introduced concepts such as transgression in performance but did not explore them in depth. I did not fully understand what I meant by
transgression in relation to the spatiality of the tent. I had edited images of
the mirrors lining the interior as a device to separate my topics of discussion
and I had placed a quote by Foucault over this mirrored image. Intuitively I
felt there was a link between transgression and the mirrors, but had not yet
theorised it clearly.

Whilst cutting together still images of popular entertainments, I turned
to an investigation of carnival as a starting point to understand the
performances. When reading about medieval carnival, the relationship
between transgression and carnival emerged (as discussed in Chapter One
and two). Stallybrass and White’s (1986) research into carnivalesque and
transgression led me toward a quote by Foucault (Foucault & Bouchard,
1980). Foucault’s notion of transgression is a complex discourse exploring
transgression from its relationship to ‘the limit’ and the limits of self.
Transgression and its relationship to limits became a starting point for my
deeper investigation into the nature of transgression and performance at the
tent. The quote that triggered my investigation into transgression at ‘The
Famous’ is as follows:

Transgression does not seek to oppose one thing to another it does not
transform the other side of the mirror…into a glittering expanse…it's
role is to measure the excessive distance that it opens at the heart of
the limit and to trace the flashing line that causes the limit to rise …
(p. 35).

The quote seemed to include a series of elements that were housed in
the aesthetic atmosphere of the tent, such as excess in performance, limits
encountered through performance, mirrors, and the collapsing of distance. I
needed to interpret the limits at the tent and why or how they were
transgressed. I wanted to recreate a flashing line on screen as a way through
which to demonstrate a genealogy of performance that influenced the experience for spectators. Initially I was preoccupied with how the performers transgressed ‘limits’ in their performances. I represented specific elements of the acts, such as how they used their bodies, or examples of how performance was to engage spectators offstage. By the second cut I realized my research into the historical aspects of popular entertainments needed to shift focus from description of the acts to an analysis of the relationship to transgression. I revisited the images of the performances and began the process of categorization. I realized it was the style of the acts, and the way in which they used techniques to interact with the audience that was most significant, an aspect that was not reflected in the footage. I had identified a gap that could not being visually represented. What was *not* there led me deeper into the process of categorizing concepts for analysis.

When I returned to the images in the rough cut and began the first cut of the research documentary, the reading enabled me to engage in the coding of ‘low’ and ‘high’ concepts and it was in the subsequent two cuts that the higher concepts crystallized and the research shifted significantly to encompass a ‘higher’ critical perspective discussed earlier in this chapter.

I revisited transgression and its relationship to otherness in performance. The investigation into otherness led me to Butler’s concept of performativity and the performance of self and back again to study the images I constructed about the acts. In the second cut I removed the footage of the acts and instead focused on the limited footage I had of the spectators. I cut their reactions to the acts together, watching closely as they responded to the performers. I watched and re-watched segments of the interviews that described spectator responses. This process was dialogical, the images and
information gathered from them informed my reading and vice versa. I knew my research was changing direction, but I started to feel uneasy about claiming to represent ‘the spectator’ responses using only four interview participants. These interviewees were spectators, but were also experts in the field of performance, Directing, theatre, Circus and design. They also had strong associations with the tent. After cut three and four were complete I addressed this central concern in my analysis and in the voicing of the research documentary.

**The voice of the researcher in performative documentary**

The major shift that occurred during the fourth cut was the realization that I could not authentically represent anyone’s experience but my own as a spectator and that the focus of the documentary was the performer/spectator interactions offstage as much as onstage. Sauter argues the scholar of theatrical events makes meaning out of contexts by gathering insights about what he/she experienced and that this in the end “…is the best argument for the application of such a perspective” (2000, pg. 179). My research into new documentary methods also helped me understand I was not representing the actual performance; I was reconstructing it informed by the application of theoretical concepts, concepts I did not know when I first gathered the footage in the field. The iterations of the documentary ‘restored’ my understanding of my own part in the performative experience off stage. It was during this repetitive process that my understanding of my experience as a spectator began to blur with performance. I started to see that the experience at the tent was performative and my process as a researcher was also performative.
Bruzzi aligns performative documentary to Butler’s concept of performativity, whereby performances are utterances that simultaneously describe and perform an action. For example the circus-folk who travel with ‘The Famous’ refer to themselves as “Carnies”, an ironic play on a once derogatory term used to describe performers and associated crew who worked with travelling carnivals. The performers in La Clique at ‘The Famous’ have appropriated this colloquial phrase and use it to describe themselves, whilst simultaneously embodying the action/lifestyle this word describes. They do in fact travel with the show and the tent, (perhaps not all year round), but they are in fact ‘performing’ themselves when at work at the tent. The roles they perform at the tent are heightened versions of themselves, playfully represented to entertain and engage. The phrase “Carnie” becomes performative because of what it alludes to, or as Austin who originated the term performative suggests, “…in saying what I do, I actually perform that action” (Austin, 1962, p. 235). Bruzzi (2000) argues that there is parallel between the linguistic origin of performativity and performative documentary, stating:

… it is the enactment of the notion that a documentary only comes into being as it is performed, that although its factual basis (or document) can pre-date any recording or representation of it, the film itself is necessarily performative because it is given meaning by the interaction between performance and reality. (p. 186)

The dialogic relationship between the practitioner, their reinterpretation of the ‘real’ event and the subjective editing of a performative documentary is reflexively demonstrated in my research documentary by my aesthetic choices in relation to the creation of ‘chapters’ that announce my presence and also through voice over.
One of the key components of the performative documentary is its disruption of ideas concerning authenticity. In recent documentary practice, a new definition of authenticity beyond the notion of transparency has emerged (Bruzzi, 2000). This definition avoids the traditional view that documentary is about uninterrupted observation. After writing six drafts of the script using this a conventional approach to voice-over, I continued to be challenged to resolve how to traverse the space between image and word and the dialectical relationship between representation and explication.

In the second cut of the film I addressed this issue by using title on screen to foreground my ‘role’ in the film as ‘researcher’, (which I later removed), I included questions in the voice-over posed to the viewer and to myself and in some sections I removed the voice-over completely, replacing it with montage. However, I was troubled by the view that using an expository approach to voice-over to provide insights not immediately apparent in the images is an example of the “voice of God” model, whereby one authorial voice dominates (Bruzzi, 2000, p. 47). I was caught between wanting to represent my voice as a spectator, but to also indicate that my voice represents Bakhtin’s (1968) heteroglossic ‘voice of the carnival’ as discussed in Chapter Two. I was concerned that the inter-textual references interwoven throughout the research documentary would lose strength if I used conventional voice-over, but could not find a practical resolution. Despite these concerns I felt the pressure to progress and conformed to convention. I added a ‘didactic’ voice-over that articulated the ethnographic methodology, and I posed research questions in the form of text on-screen to emphasize the research component.
My use of narration stayed the same and conformed to idea that the voice of the narrator is an “omnipresent”, one-sided and didactic technique. A method I used to counter-act the didactic approach was to experiment with the soundscapes used over the montage sequences. I adhered more closely to Vertov and Shrub’s approach, whereby sound was employed “…to strengthen and broaden the montage methods of influencing the audience” (Bruzzi, 2000, p. 48). I decided to combine conventional and alternative modes of narration to highlight specific aspects of my experience of the spectacle of the performances, and the sense of community generated by the performers.

In particular I wanted to illuminate the historical links between La Clique and some of the past traditions of popular entertainments without voice-over. I chose to use a montage of archival photographs, postcards and billposters from traditional circus, travelling carnival, vaudeville and cabaret intercut with still images of The Garden of Unearthly Delights where ‘The Famous’ is located at Adelaide Fringe festival. The soundscape used over this montage features a loop of my voice singing one line from Marlene Dietrich’s version of “Falling in love again”, the effect is deliberately discordant and the images juxtaposed with the sound loop represent a loose historiography of the tent’s performative history as told by the research participants.

My presence in the narrative as a performer/spectator/researcher as the singer repeating the words to Dietrich’s song is only made explicit here in my discussion. This reflection leads me to question how explicit each performative reference in this mode should be. The choice to use the song “Falling In Love Again” is intertextual, alluding to an earlier scene featuring
David Bates recounting one of the ‘legends’ about the tent. According to this ‘legend’ Marlene Dietrich sang “Falling in love again” on the tiny stage in the 1920s. The sequence finishes with the still image of an arm with the word ‘remember’ tattooed on it, a device used to highlight the link between the performance history at the tent with authenticity. The concepts of authentic and extraordinary experience (Abrahams, 2001) are discussed in relation to the immersive environment and the communicative frame and how this affects spectator experience in Chapter Six. This is an example of how I have attempted to create a dialogic flow between the visual and written components of the thesis to demonstrate the way each mode continually informs the other inter-textually and theoretically.

After an extensive period of reading and researching transgression in relationship to Foucault’s heterotopia or ‘other space’, I divided my research into three categories: The spatial, the performative and the social. I analysed the spatial relationships using Foucault’s heterotopia (1967) and ‘immersive environments’ drawn from Cova and Cova (Cova & Cova, 2002); I examined the performative aspect at tent using Carroll’s (1999) concept of ‘role distance’ (discussed in Chapter Four) and Manolis’ ‘partial experience’ (Manolis et al., 2001), introduced in Chapter One and discussed in the following chapter. To examine the social dynamics I drew on Schechner (1993) and Turner’s (1990) concepts of ritual and performance, also detailed in Chapters One and Six. All these concepts were researched in relationship to the overarching concepts of transgression and otherness in performance.
Spectating and performing otherness: Cut three and four

In the third and fourth cut of the research documentary my aim was to refine my argument by removing much of the descriptive component, which I realized was repetitive, and replace it with theoretical observations. I did this by putting titles on screen overlaid on the interviewee’s responses. I observed that the research participants often referred to ‘The Famous’ as a ‘world’, anthropomorphizing it as a ‘she’. This ‘world’ appeared to have its own language, dress code, space and performative mode of being. I realized that this ‘otherness’ was part of the appeal for the spectator and commenced researching Foucault’s heterotopia.

Foucault (1967) argues that a heterotopia’s function is linked to six principles. The first principle argues that it is a universal but intrinsically different conceptualization of space. The second principle is dependent on time and context historically and can therefore have more than one function. For example ‘The Famous’ has existed as a venue in different countries at different periods in time in different contexts for almost one hundred years. The third principle suggests that it is a single space that juxtaposes several spaces at once. ‘The Famous’ is simultaneously part of and emplaced within a theatre, a cabaret, a garden, a bar, and a park; it is a contradictory space whereby its multiple emplacements are not necessarily compatible. The fourth principle links with slices of time for when people enter they break with traditional time and find themselves embodying the transitory festive mode of being. The fifth principle argues that the space proposes, “a system of opening and closing that both isolates then and makes them penetrable…” and that “…one can only enter with a certain permission and after having performed a certain number of gestures” (Foucault, 1967, p.
21). The fifth principle led me to revisit the stories I was told about the tent by the research participants in relation to ritual and performance, and the concept of the postmodern tribe discussed in Chapter Six. The sixth principle suggests that heterotopias have a function in relation to the rest of space such as the space of illusion experienced at a brothel. When applied to ‘The Famous’ the sixth principle highlights that ‘The Famous’ is a real space that constructs itself as space for encountering otherness in other space. Mikey Martens the Emcee explains in an interview featured in fourth cut, “I am like a brothel keeper…and I am here to look after the house”. The ‘house’ is ‘The Famous’ and it is constructed as place that is both real and other, outside and inside of all places. La Clique Producer and Emcee Brett Haylock emphasises this further in his welcome speech to the spectators at the start of the show saying, “Ladies and Gentlemen, its Tuesday night, leave all of your troubles at the door, you’re with us now. Welcome to The Famous Spiegeltent”.

This phrase became a catalyst for the way I edited the fourth cut of the film. I wanted to show the viewer that ‘The Famous’ is an example of heterotopia, rather than tell them using voice over. I used the repetition of this phrase to change my approach to voice-over influenced by the poetic mode of documentary, and avant-garde approaches to filmmaking. Nicholls asserts that poetic mode shares the conventions of modernist avant-garde cinema, notable for its rejection of continuity editing and specific spatial and temporal locations (Nicholls, 2001, p. 106).

I disrupt the viewing experience by intercutting the interviews with juxtaposed images from the past and present, creating a dream-like sequence. I attempted to resolve the difficulty I was experiencing in
deconstructing the relationship between the spectator and performer in the fourth and final edit by abandoning my earlier decision to construct a rhetorical argument in the expository mode in the research documentary. Instead in the manner of the poetic mode I chose to stress, “… mood, tone and affect much more than displays of knowledge of acts of persuasion” (Nicholls, 2001, p. 102). I kept the chapter structure and used title to introduce the viewer to each ‘chapter, whichfunctioned as a discussion about a specific aspect of analysis. i.e. aesthetics.

I edited Haylock’s opening night speech to the audience, turning his phrase “You’re with us now” into a repetitive loop laid over a panning shot of the mirrored interior of the tent. I also spliced this shot together, so it too looped along with the Haylock’s voice. The effect is an uncanny, dream-like sequence used to highlight the transition from the steps of the tent in the garden across the threshold of the tent into the fantasy world of other. The uncanny sensation evoked by the repeated sound is an inter-textual reference to the nostalgic ‘world’ inside the tent experienced by spectators — a world both known and unknown. The contrast between the carnival atmospheres in the queue outside the tent, indicating the popularity of the show, is contrasted with the darkened, mirrored interior. My aim was to emphasize the link between spatial aesthetic and the performative aesthetic, to highlight the sensorial nature of the spectator experience. I wanted to reconstruct all of the elements that contributed to the ‘authentic’ experience described by interviewees. In one sequence Mikey Marten’s, explains that the spectators have come to see more than La Clique, “They have come to see us as much as they have come to see the show”, by ‘us’ he means the people who ‘work the tent’, the crew and this emphasises the implicit desire
to experience other. I also included the repetition of the phrase, “The experience starts at the door…” reiterated by the interviewees: The house manager, Emcee, owner and Producer. I included the repetition of this phrase to emphasize the adoption of a performative style of management and the co-creation of cultural narrative as part of the experience of performance offstage at the tent. The performative interaction reconstructed in the research documentary represents the tent as a place one enters and ‘travels’ with for the night. Foucault’s heterotopia par excellence, the ship, is alluded to, linking ‘The Famous’ to a world unto itself that literally and figuratively transports people temporarily to an-other space.

Despite the development of my theoretical stance regarding otherness and transgression, I was still working to resolve how to use voice-over. I cut the film down significantly in the fourth edit and took the radical step of removing the voice over altogether; I also removed the research questions from the start of each ‘chapter’. This extreme step enabled me to see if the ordering of the images told a story with the soundscape rather than words. I wrote a poem about my experience at the tent, interwoven with references to my ethnographic process. I recorded my voice and lay the track over the images and in some ways it worked. It used the poetic mode to show rather than tell the audience about my experience as a spectator. It was a creative way to highlight concepts without didacticism and it fulfilled my aim to disrupt the ‘voice of God’ approach to narration. However, it did not elucidate the research questions. It was too abstract. I returned once more to the original expository voice-over, I cut it down substantially and re-recorded it several times, experimenting with tone. I fluctuated between a formal “disembodied” narrative voice and the conversational tone of a
research participant. I experimented even further playing with the idea of using my different voices literally: the voice of the spectator, the voice of the researcher and the voice of the filmmaker. This technique was problematic because I had made a choice early on not to feature myself in the research documentary and using a series of different disembodied voices was confusing. The central issue here was my struggle to reconcile my desire to create a “creative work” that also functioned as a piece of research. In hindsight, the process I engaged in by making the creative work created my understanding of the interrelationships at the tent, rather than the creative work representing my understanding of my experience of transgression.

I decided at this point to re-write the voice-over, viewing it as a commentary of my experience. In earlier edits I tried to carefully edit out my voice from the interviews, but the style of the interviews was conversational and was the reason why participants were able to share their experiences. The research participants were not strangers and the relationships were informed by the shared experience of celebrating, spectating and performing at ‘The Famous’ and within festival environments over a significant period of time. It was not until I acknowledged the value of these relationships that I was able to reconcile how to use my ‘voice’ in the fine cut of the research documentary. I use my voice to intervene and commentate on my experience, question and interrupt the viewer to call them to attention, to highlight the ‘constructedness’ of the piece (Bruzzi, 2000, p. 199). In the interviews I am clearly conducting a dialogue with the subjects who are also my friends, the tone of my voice is different to the tone I use when commentating during other sequences. I also
acknowledge that the presence of the camera influences how the subjects react, ‘perform’ or respond to the dialogue, regardless of my relationship to them. I became less concerned with authentically representing someone else’s experience, for example in some of the interviews I ask open-ended questions to stimulate conversation and at first did not include my responsive answers. However, I realized that this responsiveness was part of my own performance in the research documentary. I made the choice to accept that my participation contributed to the inherently performative mode of the work. I also included the research questions in the voice-over, as well as using supporting ‘titles’ on screen, to emphasise the central concepts. For example when introducing the ‘chapter’ about the “Spiegel” aesthetic, as David Bates and I talk, the title ‘aesthetics’ appears on screen. I then add other words as titles as David speaks to make explicit links to concepts, in a simple and direct way, rather than attempting to explain the evolution of the research discussed in the thesis, and reduced the running time to 20 minutes.

I removed the live footage of the acts in La Clique and instead focused on the interviewee responses about the show and the interaction with spectators, editing them creatively as a means to reveal the cultural scripts. I used still images in montage sequences, jump cuts and repetition to as the technique to illustrate this shift. The acts are spectacular and entertaining, but the focus of the documentary was not represented by the live footage. It was in the gaps, in the ephemeral performance space off stage that could not be captured that I was interested in reconstructing.

I noticed I was using the term ‘partial’ to describe the blurring of role between participants and decided to search for literature that used this term in relation to performance. In the field of consumer culture theory I found
an article that contributed to a change in the trajectory of my research and helped me find the missing link between transgression and otherness at the tent. Manolis et al. (2007) theorise the concept of consumer experience in terms of ‘partial experience’. They argue that consumers in experiential service environments partially adopt the role of the producer by actively participating in their own experience of service. The simplest example of this is the use of an automatic bank teller, whereby the consumer is literally adopting the role of the tellers’ job and providing their own service. After reading and editing I saw a link between partial experience and the blurring of role between performing and spectating. The idea that a consumer, in this context the spectator, adopts the partial role of the producer/performer indicates that a blurring of role between performing and spectating has the potential to occur. The partial adoption of the role of other works both ways- the performer also adopts the partial role of the spectator. The performer blurs their role to adopt a spectator role, spectating on the ‘performance’ of the spectator performing. Investigating ‘partial experience’ and linking it to the blurring of role further articulates my assertion that the blurring of role facilitates the transgression toward otherness. The partial adoption of role is an example of the transformative moment embodied by participants through performative interaction: They shift from one role to another, from one state to another. This is the crux of my theoretical understanding of how and why the dynamics at the ‘The Famous’ combine to set up the potential for transformative experience for all participants, not just those performing in a formalised role.

Even though my understanding of the function of the research documentary had completely transformed by the fourth cut, I had achieved
my goal to use practice-led methods and methodologies as tools to create a new understanding of the object of my research. The dialogic relationship between my studio-led practice and the written practice of my research process was truly emergent and performative, genuinely leading me to find a new interpretation of a performance experience that I thought I already understood. Researching the concept of performance using performative methods in this way demonstrates how performance ethnography uses lived experience as a method through which to interpret cultural performance in a nuanced and complex manner.
In the previous chapter I discussed the methodologies and methods used to develop concepts and explore the research questions in my research documentary (Appendix 2). I made a new connection concerning the blurring of role between performing and spectating during the process of editing, reviewing the literature, and writing my discoveries into structured ‘chapters’ that continued to transform. Foucault (1977) contends that:

Transgression does not seek to oppose one thing to another it does not transform the other side of the mirror…into a glittering expanse…its role is to measure the excessive distance that it opens at the heart of the limit and to trace the flashing line that causes the limit to rise… (p. 35)

Drawing on Foucault’s quote, I apply the categories identified and discussed in Chapters Two, Three, Four and Five including; popular entertainments and cultural performance; frame and play; and heterotopia and otherness to locate the “flashing line” that helped me identify a limit to be transgressed between the roles of performer/spectator. Tracing the “flashing line” enabled me to re-examine the performative and spatial dynamics. If the categories that make up the “flashing line” at the tent are what cause the limit to arise. What then is the limit and how is does it continually shift? As discussed in Chapter Five, I noticed I was using the word ‘partial’ to describe the performative interaction between performers and spectators and recognised the ‘limit’ as the blurring of role between spectating and performing. This important discovery and the effect on the
experience of the spectator and performer are discussed in detail in this chapter.

First I discuss concepts from consumer culture theory that relate to the spatial and performative aspects of consumer and producer desires in postmodern service environments. I examine the staging of service for, and with the ‘postmodern consumer’ (Manolis et al., 2001); and then analyse the performative interaction between performers and spectators. I discuss why I have retrieved the concepts of the ‘co-creation of service’ and cultural scripts or narrative from consumer culture theory, to analyse the interactions at ‘The Famous’. Following this I discuss ‘partial experience’ and the blurring of role between performing and spectating and its potential to co-create symbolic meaning, applying concepts from performance theory such as ritual and liminality. I then examine the effect ‘partial experience’ has on the individual using the concepts of extraordinary and shared experience from consumer culture theory, performance and anthropology. Finally I summarise why the interaction between spectators and performers is what I argue to be a transgression towards otherness via the blurring or role. I propose that the confluence of the theoretical concepts of performativity and transgression indicates that the interaction between performers and spectators is an example of a ‘partial experience’ of other. This temporary transformation sits within the liminoid realm of experience, creating an other-space, in which cultural performance is experienced. Applying Foucault, this ‘other’ space is interpreted an exemplar of the heterotopia of the mirror; it reflects, suspends and inverts reality, and operates as a space where performers and spectators experience a transgression toward otherness that has the potential to create *communitas*. 

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The postmodern consumer and the staging of experience

Consumer culture theory focuses on the “socio-cultural, symbolic, experiential and ideological aspects of consumption” (Arnould & Thompson, 2005, pg 37). Aubert-Gamet and Cova assert that management of space and consumer behaviour in postmodern landscapes needs to acknowledge that spaces have become “common spaces of societal ritualisation” (Aubert-Gamet & Cova, 1999, p. 37). The ritual they refer to is ‘shopping’, and in this chapter I reframe the notion of shopping as ritual and return it to performance as ritual. The notion of ‘staging of experience’ in service environments began to appear in literature from marketing and consumer theory over the past two decades. Pine and Gilmour (1999), apply the performance metaphor to the way in which businesses deliver services, arguing that to reframe the delivery of service as the ‘staging of experience’ improves productivity. By reframing the consumer/producer binary in what they refer to as the ‘experience economy’, they reposition consumers as guests, rather than clients or customers. Ralston argues, that by staging experience for consumers, “… their factors of demand are driven by sensations and memories rather than intangible benefits” (Ralston, Ellis, Compton, & Joogwon, 2007, p. 25). Stylised reconstructions of retail space are evident in highly profitable commercialised spaces such as cafes, bars, and restaurants, even making its way into retail banking, and as in this research, festivals. The staging of experience, as defined by Pine and Gilmour (1999), outlines four realms of experience: entertainment, education, aesthetic and escapist. These criteria are used as markers to frame the experience for the consumer. The entertainment is the passive participation in the event; this includes the offstage elements such as the
drinks served, music or other atmospheric elements. The second dimension—education—includes active participation in education about the event; a post event lecture or notes in a programme. The educational elements may also inform participants about the site in which they are experiencing. The third and fourth dimensions, the aesthetic and the escapist, involve immersion in the experience. Petkus, drawing on Pine and Gilmour, argues that in arts settings such as museums participants are offered opportunities to “become the artists”, as in workshops for children (Petkus, 2002, p. 51). The aesthetic dimension involves the ‘passive immersion’ in the experience, affected by the authenticity of the environment and the proximity to the action. When applying the Pine and Gilmour criteria to ‘The Famous’, (an example of reconstructed carnival), there is a key difference that is the focus of my analysis. Pine and Gilmour’s aesthetic, escapist and entertainment dimensions involve ‘passive immersion’. The active participation occurs in ‘educational’ lectures or ‘escapist’ workshops and are pre-planned and highly structured. The experience at ‘The Famous’ extends the four elements identified by Pine and Gilmour. It includes the notion of passive immersion in the event, but the active participation is spontaneous and unstructured. It is activated by the spiegeltent performance by the non-performers ‘at the door’. Who key the spectators to engage in playful interaction? It is the combination of the planned and improvised that is of interest here. It is important to note, however that drawing a link between consumer culture theory and the performative landscape at the tent is in some ways disruptive as the framing of the tent, although commercial in many regards, is driven by a set of complex intentions that merge the creation of art and commercial enterprise. The common thread between the
mainstream approach and the alternative approach to staging experience for
the consumer/spectator at ‘The Famous’ is the use of the communicative
frame – the unscripted role-play and the disruption of expectation.

Manolis (2001) argues that consumers are seeking meaningful and
symbolic interactions in immersive settings underpinned by the desire for
community. He identifies a “discernible postmodern” moment in the
delivery of services between producers and consumers of products which
has influenced the expectations, experiences and therefore the symbolic and
social interactions occurring in service environments, including those that
use performance. Drawing on Manolis et al, Cova and Cova (1990; Cova &
Cova, 2002), Aubert-Gamet and Cova (1999), Arnould and Thompson
(2005) and Price et al (1995), I draw on postmodern conceptualisations of
the producer-consumer and production-consumption dialectic to examine
the ‘delivery of services’ or what I call the ‘staging of experience’ at the
tent.

Consuming cultural narratives: Co-creating
meaningful experience

Postmodernism critiques the modernist myth that privileged
production as “meaningful and valuable” and “…consumption as
destructive and only a consequence of production” (Manolis et al., 2001, p.
229). The postmodern approach to production and consumption disrupts this
binary and blurs the relationship, no longer privileging production as the
creator of product. In post-modernity boundaries between producers and
consumers are porous and accommodate notions of flexible production,
work culture, personal empowerment and less hierarchically structured
organisations (Manolis et al., 2001). This is in contrast to modernist
manifestations of self whereby identity was associated with work. The
dissolution of modernist boundaries between the public and private, work
and home landscapes has disrupted stable places for identity formation and
as a consequence identity is now more associated with lifestyle and
individual experience.

Linda Price and Eric Arnould et al.’s (1995) research into other
dimensions of consumer experience identified a gap that seeks to address
the postmodern shift in service environments in the 1990s. This shift saw
the development of relationships rather than transactions (my emphasis) in
approaches to service delivery. It includes an expectation by consumers who
seek shared experience and the formation of temporary communities.
Conventional models of service provision, that is the organisation and the
employees, privilege the producer as primary actors. This framework
separates the consumer from the producer and the outcome of products lies
with the producer. This model does not take into account the interactive
relationships or the potential for symbolic meaning that can occur in these
interactions, distinguishing it from the postmodern model (Manolis et al.,

Empirical and positivist approaches to the analysis of service
provision dominate marketing research. Manolis et al. use a postmodern
paradigm to engage phenomenological and hermeneutical readings of the
partial employee/consumer experience as an alternative approach. They
argue that this philosophical approach is relevant in the current postmodern
moment. In marketing theory, analysis of service provision using
postmodern critique highlights the consumer’s quest for ‘experience’,
‘community’ and ‘belonging’ through the development of temporary
interpersonal connections. The quests for meaningful experience as Jenks indicated may well be ‘routinely guaranteed’ in some servicescapes, yet I now analyse if this detracts from the ‘authenticity’ of the encounter. The idea of authenticity is discussed as an important aspect of ‘partial experience’ experience later in the chapter.

Mari and Poggesi (2013) conducted a systematic survey of literature to examine the theoretical and empirical findings on how consumer behaviour is affected by ‘servicescapes’ - the ‘servicescape’, a term coined by Bitner (1992), refers to the physical surroundings or ‘built environment’. Citing 188 peer-reviewed papers from marketing and consumer culture literature, they found the physical environment a pivotal aspect of customer experience. Arnould argues that each servicescape has its own subset of social conventions and expectations that shape the nature and reach of personal experiences and social interactions (Arnould et al., 2006). Servicescapes may at times transcend their commercial purposes for they create environments that have the potential to produce personal and socially significant meanings for consumers.

Multiple phrases are used to describe the nature of interactive communication in servicescapes that adopt role-play and there are synergies between those drawn from performance theory, CCT and marketing theory. As discussed in Chapter Two, social scientist Carroll (1999) uses ‘participant role status’, Schechner (2001) ‘restored behaviour’ and in sociology Goffman (1959) refers to ‘patterned behaviour’ to describe what I identify as ‘performative interaction’ between spectators and performers. Performative interaction encompasses Butler’s (1990) notion of the ‘performative utterance’, which is part of a ‘stylised repetition of acts’. The
repetition of certain ‘performances’ or behaviours normalises them until they appear natural, or part of the identity of the person engaged in the performance. What the performer is saying becomes inseparable from what the performer is doing, and these behaviours converge to construct identity, and is an example of how performance is being used to ‘stage experience’ offstage as a means to create meaningful experience and to encourage consumers to return to the ‘servicescape’. The ‘performative utterances’ initiated by the performers are iterations of the performance genres of cabaret and vaudeville and the conventions appropriated and blurred ‘key’ (Goffman, 1975) behaviour for participants. The flow of behaviour between performers and spectators is significant in that it appears to merge the notion of performativity with performance. As a result the boundaries between who is performing and who is spectating are blurred. The roles between consuming and producing, spectating and performing start to blur as each person responds to keys that ‘restore’ an experience of festival and performance. The staging of experience at ‘The Famous’ therefore blurs the boundaries between genres, space and performance as a means to co-create memorable and meaningful experience.

Arnould et al. (2006) use the phrase ‘communicative staging’ to examine the relationship between consuming and producing experience in servicescapes. The notion of ‘communicative staging’ is a managerial technique that foregrounds the site in which the service occurs, and is the primary mode in which an environment is presented and interpreted. It refers to the way in which a servicescape communicates its meaning from service providers to customers, and these meanings are tangible and intangible. Arnould’s study examines environments that market natural
settings such as white water rafting expeditions. Part of the cultural narrative communicated in these settings is the ‘preservation of the site’ over customer needs and wants. Using the term communicative staging to describe the environment at ‘The Famous’ reveals how the site is ‘preserved’ using a cultural script within a broader narrative of Fringe culture.

I now interpret the construction and enactment of the cultural scripts at ‘The Famous’ from two angles. Drawing on examples of interviews featured in my research documentary (Appendix), I discuss how the performers who travel with the tent identify with it and they use their cultural script to interact with spectators.

Deighton the intelligibility of the narrative, as well as the consumer’s willingness to participate are central factors that determine if performance becomes an ‘experience’, whether fictional or not. (Deighton, 1992). Drawing on Arnould (2006), I contend that, the staging of cultural scripts, produces the shared experience of other that contributes the co-creation of a temporary community. The cultural script is the story that a culture tells to itself about itself. As established in the previous section, the cultural scripts performed at the tent draw on multiple influences to reconstruct an experience of otherness. Arnould argues that the performers/employees are sometimes aware of their performative role, but also emphasises that communicative staging is never entirely strategic or rehearsed (Arnould et al., 2006). I prefer to use a term from performance studies to describe the interaction to incorporate the notion of performativity. Therefore I call the communicative staging at ‘The Famous’ performative interaction. The notion of performative interaction draws from Butler’s interpretation of the
performative because the performers embody the lifestyle they are
‘performing’, it is part of the identity that each performer has constructed
for herself; the ‘doing and thing done’ is in some ways inseparable (Austin,
1962). I contend that the performers at ‘The Famous’ are reflexively aware
that they are what they are performing; they adopt the role of other whilst
simultaneously embodying the role of other in their offstage lives. This
performance of other forms the basis of the cultural script that is added to by
the spectators who visit ‘The Famous’. In my research documentary I
feature the Emcee of La Clique, Mikey Martens musing about what
spectators expect when they visit ‘The Famous’. He says, “They come to
see ‘us’, as much as they come to see the show” (Appendix 2, personal
communication, 2009). He suggests that it is the “…experience of the
risqué, the danger …” of the “carnival people” that “they” (the spectator’s)
are seeking. Their awareness of their otherness is then incorporated into the
unscripted performance of ‘self’ shared with spectators. Each of the
interviewee’s attitude toward the tent, its history and authenticity also
contributes to their desire to look after it. They all emphasized that the
experience at ‘The Famous’ was authentic, using phrases including; ‘it is
the experience’, a ‘total experience’, ‘it’s real’ when describing the
aesthetics of the space. I cut the phrases together in a sequence to highlight
the perception that the aesthetic and historical environment contributed to
the ‘authentic’ experience. After editing the interviews together and seeing
these phrases repeated by different people who work at the tent I interpreted
the comments as an example of a cultural narrative created about the tent,
enacted through these ‘scripts’ The people who work at the tent have
organically created this cultural script, and they repeat or ‘restore’ for
spectators its narrative not only to frame the spectator experience, but also to enhance their own. Despite its authentic history, “The Famous” is a contrived space or a ‘servicescape’ (Bitner, 1992). It is a 100-year-old venue and it has travelled throughout certain parts of Europe staging performance. But, the theatrical frame presented to spectators of a tent that travels the world staging circus/cabaret experience is a reconstruction of a nostalgic idea of vaudeville, cabaret and 1920s bohemia. In the research documentary House Manager Simon Barfoot’s sentiment about the tent highlights how the ‘preservation of the site’ can shape the formation of the cultural script (Arnould et al., 2006). Barfoot describes the tent as something he needs to “protect” and “respect” because of “its authenticity”. I feature this interview to illustrate why the tent is integral to the experience of performance at the tent, it as much about the tent as it is about the show. He emphasises, “David owns the tent, but it’s ours, it’s our tent”.

Departing from CCT, I return to performance studies to further interpret the co-creation of the cultural script from the spectator’s point of view. I identify distinct parallels between circus discourse (Carmeli, 1988) and the co-creation of spectator experience, and consumer culture theory.

A central aspect of Carmeli’s notion of ‘nostalgic circus discourse’ is the spectator’s agreement to participate in the faked reality of its constructed world. Carmeli argues the spectators conjure the notion of a total order in the circus that subjectifies their own reality as a part of this illusionary space. The circus discourse traverses a unique time/space/event sequence that facilitates symbolic and literal liminal experiences for all participants using personal and unscripted and rehearsed narrative. Circus discourse emerged from a fascination with the circus world depicted in film and
literature highlighting the fact that its social world became as important to spectators as the performance. Following this, I argue that the spectators at ‘The Famous’ have an expectation aligned with the arrival of the circus that intersects with notions of the desire of the postmodern consumer to seek an experience of ‘other’ space and time in immersive servicescapes.

As discussed in Chapter One, spectators attending a Fringe festival are seeking notions of otherness. Dehaene and De Cauter refer to people who dwell permanently in heterotopias, in other cultural spheres of existence, such as priests, gurus, actors, artists, bohemians, athletes, entertainers, as heterotopians. These nomadic outsiders represent ambiguous representations of otherness that are simultaneously adored or hated, expelled or embraced by everyday society. They represent the transgressive, eccentric, taboo, sacred and extraordinary (Dehaene & De Cauter, 2008). For the spectator at ‘The Famous’ the circus people they encounter evoke images of the “circus-folk” (Carmeli, 1988), bohemians, and entertainers represented in film and literature. The performance of otherness by the house staff at the tent is both anticipated and recognised by the spectators. Spectator’s expectations are fulfilled when they interact with the performers, and are an example of Dehaene’s ‘heterotopians’. The performative interaction at the tent is facilitated by the shared cultural narrative of circus by participants, and is a launching pad for the front of house ‘spruikers’ to encourage the audience to play along, engendering a sense of ownership and belonging. The performative interaction is an example of what Turner calls a zone ‘negotiated uncertainty’. This is a liminoid zone of play whereby participants understand that each is playing a role that is spontaneous but governed by the conventions of the play frame.
At ‘The Famous’ the play frame is guided by the conventions of performance genres and festival environments that use performative interaction. Play is also stimulated by the informal dress code or ‘spiegeltent aesthetic’ adopted by performers and spectators who visit the tent and return mimicking the style of dress. The distinct style of dressing is a not a formal uniform, however, it has evolved to symbolise a ‘tribe’ associated with the tent. The adoption of a “spiegeltent aesthetic’, as identified in the research documentary in an interview with Simon Barfoot (Appendix 2, Barfoot, personal communication, 2009) evolved between the performers who travel with the tent, and the spectators is another example of the co-creation of cultural narrative. The performative interaction invites the blurring of role between performing and spectating whereby the spectator adopts the partial role of performer, and the performer adopts the partial role of spectator.

To clarify the notion of ‘partial experience’ further I briefly return to consumer culture. Manolis et al. assert that in postmodern service encounters, “consumers and employees engage in the production and consumption of the service as a symbolic act that includes the production of themselves” (2001, p. 226). They also argue that the postmodern paradigm encapsulates the notion of the partial employee, partial consumer and the interrelationships between the two provide an alternative paradigm or meta-theoretical lens through which to analyse social dynamics in service provision.

At ‘The Famous’ the ‘performances’ are in fact part of the ‘service’ and include the performance of La Clique onstage, the purchase of tickets from the Box Office, beverages from the bar, and ushering. As established the concept of the partial employee/partial consumer contends that the
nature of the interactions between service employees and consumers has blurred and that both participate in interactions that involve the co-creation of service experience. The ‘production of self’ occurs in multiple ways, notably through the temporary construction of relationships with the service provider and the active participation in the consumption and production of a service they are receiving. The consumer participates in the creation of the service, whilst receiving it, “…contributing resources to the organisation in the form of information of effort”, therefore becoming a partial employee. (Manolis et al., 2001, p. 226). The enactment of cultural scripts through the blurring of role is also an example of why notions of transgression in performance have the potential to reshape social dynamics to create community through shared experience. In the next section I expand on the co-created experience of service to focus on ‘the partial consumer’ or in the case of ‘The Famous’- the partial spectator. My aim is to contribute a new dimension to the well-documented understanding that the spectator contributes to the co-creation of a memorable experience of performance. I investigate what happens as the performer adopts the partial experience of spectator. To analyse the transformation of the performer to spectator I identify parallel concepts drawn from CCT and performance studies such as ‘meaning-flow’ (Meyrick, 2000) and ‘linking-value’ (Cova & Cova, 2002).

**Meaning-flow and linking-value: Constructing experience in servicescapes**

In consumer culture theory as in performance theory terms used to describe the postmodern service environment pertain to space, time and context differ slightly, yet I have identified instances where shared meanings apply. Performance theorist Julian Meyrick’s (2000 meaning-
flow, (introduced in Chapter Two), highlights the significance of the interactions between the space, time and event, as do Schechner and Turner (Schechner, 1985, 1993; Turner, 1969, 1982, 1990), who investigate the time, space and event in relation to ritual and performance, (discussed in Chapter One). Meyrick argues that spectators in non-traditional theatre spaces are seeking ‘direct’ encounters with a sense of the ‘real’ and ‘authentic’. ‘Linking-value’, a term used in CCT, is in some ways synonymous with the notion of ‘meaning-flow’. ‘as it too identifies the importance of the spatial environment and associated frame, the significance of the performative relationships between participants, and the period of time spent engaged with the event as determinants of the depth of experience.

In CCT terms to describe space are specifically focused on its relationship to service or the act of consumption and include; servicescape (Bitner, 1992), physical environment or physical evidence and environmental cue (Aubert-Gamet & Cova, 1999; Berry, 2004). Analysis of the physical environment and the consumer’s relationship to it, highlights reliance on interactions that are in some cases intangible, and move beyond the purchase of a material product, for example the consumer may be ‘buying an experience’ (Jenks, 2003). The use of tangible clues such as ‘physical evidence’ locates space as a social artifact, the meaning of which is co-created by the consumer. As discussed in the previous section the cultural script at ‘The Famous’ is co-created using a narrative connected to notions of carnival, bohemia and cabaret, blurred with nostalgic circus discourse (Carmeli, 1988). These include the performative concepts of release and renewal through celebration, participation using role-play, and
the inversion of social hierarchies. The spatial aesthetic of the tent with its mirrored interior and art nouveau furnishings is the ‘physical evidence’ interpreted by all the participants as ‘authentic’, and the narrative flows from this ‘authentic’ notion of space.

‘Linking-value’ is the ability of a product/service to create and reinforce bonds that strengthen the sense of community and in some instances establishes a sense of tribal belonging (Aubert-Gamet & Cova, 1999; Cova & Cova, 2002). The linking value of the product/services offered is as important as the use-value of the service, or as Cova and Cova assert, “The citizen of 2000 is less interested in the objects of consumption than in the social links and identities that come with them” (Cova, & Cova, 2002, p. 2). ‘Linking-value’ is rarely intentionally placed within a service, yet is where emotional experience is generated (Cova & Cova, 2002). It follows that ‘The Famous’ is the ‘physical evidence’ or ‘social artifact’ used to stage the ‘linking value’ between the intangible, experiential, emotional and symbolic interactions between participants. That is the linking value and use value of the (service) encounter at ‘The Famous’ is affected by its aesthetic presence and its value as a symbolic object (Arnould et al., 2006). The blurriness of the spatial boundaries at ‘The Famous’ enables a mode of exchange that evokes the historic function of the marketplace as a place that linked services and consumers to community formation (Aubert-Gamet & Cova, 1999, p. 39). By reframing the performative metaphor from within CCT, I have been able to expand my understanding of the performative dynamics at the tent.

To elaborate further, the frame of the Fringe festival ‘keys’ the performative interactions taken up by performers and spectators. The
performative interaction disrupts expectations of participants. Even though each participant- spectator and performer- are seeking encounters with otherness by either working at or visiting the tent, the performative interactions contribute to an intangible experience of community that enhances the experience. The aesthetic environment combined with the performative interaction ‘keyed’ around the authenticity of the tent creates ‘meaning-flow’ and with each performance the cultural script is continually re-created. The –co-creation of experience is able to occur because ‘The Famous’ is a ‘shared-space’ (Brook, 1968). Price et al. (1995) found that services that occur in close proximity to consumers facilitate feelings of attachment and involvement explaining that the, “close proxemics motivate self-revelation…and positively effect overall value of overall service encounters” (p. 85). ‘The Famous’ is an example of a space that includes “…recesses, corners and curves, fuzziness, enabling people to get together in part open part closed space that favours community encounters” (Aubert-Gamet & Cova, 1999, p. 42).

In my research documentary, owner, David Bates explains the value of the size of ‘The Famous’. He refers to the space as ‘intimate’, emphasising that not only are spectators enjoying the spectacle of the acts onstage, they are experiencing the enjoyment on the faces of the audience across from them, reflecting their experience back to them. The proximity of the spectacle collapses the distance between the performer and spectator and this enables the spectator to ‘see’ the humanness of the performer performing extraordinary physical acts. When interviewed, Producer of La Clique Brett Haylock refers to the value of seeing the “sweat on the brow” of the performers “…who are so close you can almost touch them”
I argue that another effect is also taking place. The collapsing of distance ignites the experience for the performer. The performer is able to engage more deeply with the spectators because they are closer to them. They are able to feed off the reactions of the spectators, and it is during these interactions that the blurring of role begins to occur onstage. The spectator responds to the performer’s key to play, and adopts the partial role of the performer, as they clap, cheer or interject and heckle. In turn the performer watches the spectator as performer, adopting the partial experience of the spectator, enjoying the performance. It is this intangible blurring of experience between being and doing that co-creates another space for meaning to be co-created and shared, highlighting that proximity and ‘atmospherics’ is part of the ‘linking-value’ of the experience.

Cova and Cova argue that the “(re) construction or (re) possession of meanings through shared experience and enactment through ritual is the most potent form of maintaining tribal identities in our postmodern society” (Cova & Cova, 2002). Applying Turner and Schechner, the performative interaction that underpins the staging of service at ‘The Famous’ engages participants in a process of non-spiritual ritual that creates meaningful experiences that hold symbolic value. They argue that ritualised behaviour extends the entire range of human action and that performance may be described as “Ritualised behaviour conditioned/permeated by play” (Schechner, 2003, p. 99). Schechner elaborates further suggesting, “The more ‘freely’ a species play, the more likely performance, theatre, scripts and drama are to emerge in connection with ritualised behaviour” (p. 99). In light of this he argues that art can be considered as a specific combination of
play and ritual. The symbolic meaning co-created via the performative interaction facilitates an experience of communitas; a community that bonds together through ritualised communication in particular spaces (Turner, 1969). What kind of ritual processes can be attributed to consumer behaviour at ‘The Famous’ how is the experience of communitas evident and why does it facilitate symbolic meaning? To answer these questions I analyse the social dynamics at play from three angles; the time frame in which the product/performance is delivered, the space in which the encounter/service occurs and the social context in which the experience/encounter is shaped/framed. I am deliberately using interrelated terms here to demonstrate the inter-changeability of key words used in performance theory, and CCT.

**Liminoid encounters: Symbolic time and communitas in the postmodern servicescape**

Ritual process, liminality and reflexivity are all key features of communitas. The connection between the everyday and performative self is significant for it signals the transformation of the individual. As established in Chapter One, Van Gennep’s research into ritual and rites of passage distinguished phases of performance or passages of time whereby the behaviour of participants shifted from one basic human state to another, over three stages of time. The stages include; dislocation from everyday life; a “betwixt-and-between condition involving seclusion from the everyday scene” and re-connection to the everyday world (MacAlloon, 1984, p. 21). The second of these stages is similar to what Turner refers to as liminal.

In *The Anthropology of Performance* (1988), Turner and Schechner argue that cultural performances exist within symbolic time frames, event
generated timeframes and enable liminal moments for the spectator. Drawing Van Gennep, Turner argues that cultural performances sit within a ‘subjunctive” mood expressed through performative genres that deal with possibility, desire and ‘what if” scenarios. Cultural subjectivity in performance comments reflexively on cultural realities, referred to as “indicative” moods of culture; how we function amidst systems and facts of daily life. In other words Turner creates a distinction between the performative world of constructed performances such as carnivals, festivals, theatre, and film, and the daily activity of life; economic, domestic, and politics, or in the case I am constructing the delivery and consumption of services. At ‘The Famous’ the spectator/partial employee reflexively transitions between these two moods, between the constructed world of the tent and the reality that they are purchasing the service, enacting metaxis. Brazilian theatre practitioner Augusto Boal’s notion of ‘metaxis’ is the shift that occurs when an event is effectively dramatically framed, it is “The state of belonging completely and simultaneously to two different autonomous worlds: the image of reality and the reality of image” (Boal, 1995, p. 43). For example the partial spectator/employee is seeking an experience of otherness and because of the effective framing of the cultural performance at ‘The Famous’, enacts otherness.

Ritual time absorbs participants and when experiencing art they can “lose themselves” by momentarily stepping away from conscious critical mentality (Meyerhoff, 1984a, p. 147). Barbara Meyerhoff argues that ritual time incorporates experiences of flow and duration that according to personal significance may facilitate a sense of freedom from any sense of time. She explains that, “Ordinary time is suspended and a new time
instituted, geared to the event taking place, shared by those participating integrating the private experience into a collective one” (p. 147).

Chronological time is replaced by symbolic, event-generated time for the mood of ritual has its own time, and this sweeps the spectator away from the objective, instrumental frame of mind associated with everyday life. Interpreting Turner, Meyerhoff elaborates suggesting, that this can create a euphoric condition of *communitas* that is powerful and transformative, as this intense kind of communion transcends individual separateness. Meyerhoff argues that in ritual time past, present and memory ignite through the enactment of tradition. She contends that ritual has the potential to link human experience to symbolic meaning explaining, “Ritual inevitably carries a basic message of order, continuity and predictability” whereby “new events are connected to preceding ones, incorporated into a stream of precedents so that they are recognised as growing out of tradition and experience” (Meyerhoff, 1984, p. 152).

Manolis draws on Cova whose research emphasises consumer interest in “local experiences, participation in experience process and immersion in thematic settings with others” (Manolis et al., 2001, p. 230). ‘The Famous’ is an example of what Cova refers to as an immersive environment whereby the extended duration of the event facilitates meaning beyond the function of the service. The individual detaches from their everyday environment and cultural conditions and enters the closed space of the tent via its *limen* (threshold), “passing through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributions of the past or coming state” (Turner, 1969, p. 94). The performers who enact and share the rituals attached to the cultural narrative of the tent assist this passage.
At ‘The Famous’ I contend that the performative interaction between performers and spectators raises participation to the cultural level of play, and cultural play is an example of liminoid experience. This occurs because of the way in which the space is framed and therefore interpreted. Schechner and Turner’s concept of ‘space’ in relation to cultural performance pertains to the physical and symbolic setting in which a performance event takes place and this includes, indoor, outdoor, transformed, sacred and multi-space. The cultural performance space has multiple emphases, rather than one fixed point for spectators to observe. Drawing on Bauman, Turner argues that cultural performance is reflexive for it transfers meanings and values embodied through performance using cultural forms to make meaning of culture (Turner, 1990). I identify a correlation between Schechner and Turner’s concept of the symbolic and physical spaces for cultural performance, and Cova and Aubert-Gamet notion of postmodern space. Cova and Aubert-Gamet divide postmodern urban spaces into two categories; closed and open spaces. Closed spaces are reserved for “tribes or traditional communities” such as private clubs and are places where people ‘put down roots’, where it is possible to “recognise oneself while identifying with a community”. Open places, like the café or restaurant are both private and public or common (Aubert-Gamet & Cova, 1999, p. 40). I apply this idea to the ‘The Spiegel Garden’ outside the tent and the interior of ‘The Famous’ blur the notion of open and closed spaces. The ‘tribe’ of performers populates the open and closed space at ‘The Famous’ and they also welcome others. The others have the choice to temporarily join the tribe; ‘keyed’ by the performative interactions. The open and closed nature of the space frames an experience of authentic otherness through the
blurring of role between performing and spectating. This provides an opportunity for members of the tribe and newcomers to adopt the partial experience of other and in doing so “recognise oneself whilst identifying with a community” (1999, p.40). This recognition forms the basis of meaningful and symbolic experience. Price et al. refer to a study of waiters by Mars and Nicod who distinguish service encounters that use “open” or “closed boundary’s” with an “open boundary” resembling a meeting between friends. They explain that, “…extended encounters are likely to lead into boundary open encounters” (Price et al., citing Mars and Nicod, 1995, p. 85). In a ‘boundary open’ exchange the customer believes that the service provider (crew member) is interested in them as a person and this can engender the feeling of a relationship or a sense of temporary *communitas*. They argue that extended encounters are likely to become boundary open for they enable interpersonal interactions to evolve over time. Therefore a relationship between cultural performances that rely on participation and deliberately seek to create an ‘experience’ for spectators, are not dissimilar to the servicescapes that aim to create meaningful experiences for consumers. For Schechner and Turner examining the ‘meaning-flow’, between the spectator and performer within cultural performance, is a way to identify specific ritual processes used to create symbolic meaning (Schechner, 1993; Turner, 1982).

**Ritual and performance: The postmodern tribe at ‘The Famous’**

The aestheticisation of everyday life in postmodern landscapes points to the adoption of certain lifestyles and identities that form the basis of postmodern tribes. The boundaries of the postmodern tribe are conceptual
and members of the tribe are united by shared feelings, experiences and (re)appropriated signs (Shane, 2005, p. 231). The use of ritualised behaviour by postmodern tribes is a way to express shared belief and social belonging and this is supported by the use of “…cult objects, ritual clothing, sacred of ceremonial places, magical or ritual words, idols, icons and sacred images” (Cova & Cova, 2002, p. 16). Cult objects, ritual clothing, icons and ritual words feature across multiple levels. I apply the idea of the ‘cult object’ to ‘The Famous’; it has become a social artifact ascribed iconic meaning by the circus- folk and associated ‘tribe’ through the continual construction of cultural narrative. The cast and crew at the tent enact ritual processes, performatively signaling their otherness through dress and role-play. For example, some of the spectators emulate the vintage style of dress worn by performers.

The narrative staged by the performers at the tent frames the consumer’s desire to seek what Arnould et al. call “extraordinary experience” (Cova & Cova, 2002). Extraordinary experience is distinguished from everyday experience and includes dynamic interpersonal interaction, immersion in an intensely framed environment and expectations of authenticity. Anthropologist Roger Abraham’s “anthropology of experience” acknowledges the deeply coded nature of the word ‘experience’ and seeks to unpack meaning paying careful attention to the social context to which it is applied. Experience is a term Abrahams applies to both the flow of life and a specific event; an experience; a term of connections that embodies meanings and feelings (author’s emphasis). Locating the typical aspects of an event and the sentiment attached to it, links the doing to the feeling, and this reinforces shared sentiment (Abrahams, 2001; Schechner,
1985; Turner, 1982). Identifying what is typical enables the location of the atypical or extraordinary, and Abrahams argues that the intensity of an experience is what interrupts the flow of the everyday experience or life-flow and transforms it into extraordinary experience.

In their study of river rafting expeditions, Arnould and Price (Arnould & Price, 1993) suggest that in pursuing extraordinary experience the consumer is seeking a symbolic experience that fosters the notion of Turner’s dialectic of *communitas* and structure juxtaposed. *Communitas* occurs in the liminal realm of lived through experience, in the planned or structured realm supported by the narrative delivered by the guides, and then re-told by the participants (Turner, 1969). The consumer may desire an intense emotional outcome by engaging in an extraordinary experience, like river rafting, but those participants interviewed by Arnould could not articulate clearly what these were, since emotions are subjective, fluctuating across individual and social situations. This embodiment of performative behaviour is not formally ‘learned’ and is an example of what Arnould defines as a ‘vague scripts’. These ‘scripts’ play with notions of authenticity and spontaneity to create a sense of connection between the producer and consumer. The participants value these seemingly ephemeral attributes and as Arnould elaborates, “In a search for authenticity, consumers of extraordinary experience surrender their expectations to the “immediate encounter with being” (Arnould & Price, 1993, p. 26). The perceived spontaneity of the event differentiates it from the everyday and also links it to notions of ritual whereby participants can cross a threshold into the flow of the experience, into a letting-go process that is both unifying and liberating. Arnould citing Abrahams defines extraordinary experience as *an*
experience, one that can be retold and relived as a reflexive experience of
experience. An experience is planned and part of life’s flow, it incorporates
scenic wholeness, heightened awareness; it can be repeated or reported on
(Arnould & Price, 1993). Applying Arnould’s conceptualisation of
‘extraordinary experience’ to the ‘The Famous’ highlights what members of
the tribe deem significant. The re-telling becomes part of the performance of
self that the participants are seeking and the level of intensity of the
experience sets up the expectation for the spectator/performer that
something meaningful should occur. More importantly it makes connection
between the everyday life of the participants and the “more intense, framed
and stylised practices” (Abrahams, 2001, p. 49) of the lives of the other they
are seeking at the tent. Abrahams argues that one of the criteria by which we
judge ourselves and others is how “real’ they appear to be and in turn how
we can then “be ourselves”. The concept of “the real thing” relates to, “how
fully others are able to make us recognise the range of experiential
possibilities, whether or not we go through such experiences ourselves”
(2001, p. 66). In this, we see that the ordinary and extraordinary sit
alongside each other for the value centres on the action, facilitated by the
frame. By helping us recognise our potential for difference by performing
difference, the spectators at the tent don’t care whether the circus-folk really
are real. In fact as Abrahams elaborates:

…many times the ability to pull off a role with spirit and in a manner
to which we may respond in kind, appears more important than
whether the other is being sincere or even authentic. (p. 66)

When in the frame of a constructed environment Abrahams, drawing
on Goffman and Bateson, argues that participants are involved in a replay of
experience that introduces distance from their actions as enacted in the ‘real’ world. He explains:

Any time we agree among ourselves to enter these realms, we achieve a particular relief from the responsibility of our actions. We are able to say that we are not ourselves in one way or another in such a state (p. 50).

Abrahams’ realm is similar to Turner’s notion liminoid realm of play. In the liminoid realm players agree to play ‘as if’ the game is real. David Bates’ shaping of the experience is characterised by the assumption of ‘participant role status’ by the spectator situated by the performative interaction Carroll argues:

…[The] framed nature of the event allows the participants to behave “as if” they are in a different context and therefore respond “as if” they are in a different set of interpersonal relationships. (p.67)

The goal is to create a shift in perception for the spectator and performer who are simultaneously holding two frames of reference in mind: participating and spectating on their participation. The shift in role, or the roles they adopt, argues Carroll, enables participants in a cultural event to “…feel protected within a “penalty free” area of dramatised social behaviour and comment” (p.67). Drawing on Boal, Carroll attributes the shift that occurs in the spectator’s social consciousness to metaxis. Carroll’s interpretation suggests that the spectator experiences a kind of ‘protection’ within the framed environment enabling engagement with the dramatic enactment of the ludic of the carnival, without feeling exposed to social censure.

Abrahams applying Denzin refers to the kind of interpersonal interaction that facilitates emotional experience as ‘epiphenomenal’
The crew has shaped their experience as employees to include a performance of their own identities, and they become the partial spectator of the experience they have co-created.

Meyerhoff (1984) explains that the potential of ritual to expose its own ‘constructedness’ introduces the element of risk for participants. If the frame is disrupted, it exposes the construct of self as a construct of our imagination and the vulnerability associated with exposure is risky. It is the paradox of risk and predictability that gives ritual processes power and imbues them with symbolic meaning. Meyerhoff reiterates that part of the value of ritual processes is that they are ‘conspicuously artificial’, that the constructed nature of rituals relies on the predictable and participating in the predictable creates a frame for spectators to play. In circus discourse Carmeli argues that the visibility of the arrival of a travelling circus tent and its ‘family’ deliver an “expected unexpectedness” to spectators (Carmeli, 1990). Posters, television advertisements and media coverage advertising its season, have signaled its arrival and yet part of the narrative constructed about the arrival of the tent is that it ‘appears over night’ in parkland in the midst of the city. The nature of its arrival is an important part of the shaping of the experience of other. A parallel can be drawn here with the promotion of the ‘total’ environment of ‘The Famous’. *La Clique* is advertised months in advance, alongside the promoting of the tent itself as a festival event (discussed in chapter four). It takes days to construct the environment of The Spiegel Garden, transforming the urban space of a park into a fringe space (as discussed in Chapter One), and the performers are also highly visible. This helps to promote *La Clique* and creates a sense of anticipation for spectators as Brett Haylock (2009) explains in *A Tent and A Show*:
When we arrive in a city people are curious about us. They [the cast] like to party, they like to have fun…they are highly visible… people want to know where we are from, what we are doing in town and that is how we sell the show (Appendix 2, Haylock, personal communication, 2009).

The notion of the ‘total play’ of the circus suggests a heterotopian dimension that extends to the back-stage lives of the circus-folk and beyond the tent, to where members of its community gather online to reconnect when ‘The Famous’ leaves town. Applying Carmeli, the postmodern, totalising world of ‘The Famous’ serves to connect rather than distance the circus performers from the spectators using circus discourse as a vehicle for play. The ‘othering’ of experience as Emcee Mikey Martens in his interview uses performative interaction to open boundaries, “They want a bit of danger, a bit of risk, so we give them that … I am like brothel keeper, a little bit sleazy, a bit cheeky…” (Appendix 2). The persona Martens adopts exaggerates his travelling life with the tent, and he tells spectators that he travels with the tent all year round, arguing that that is what they want to hear. These ‘tall stories’, tales or exaggerated versions of the truth are part of the spectator’s expectation and paradoxically represent the desire for ‘authentic’ experience. By opening up the boundary for spectators to play, Martens is in effect inviting the spectator to play along to reinvent themselves as ‘other’ for the evening too. It is here that the experience becomes extraordinary. Meyerhoff’s notion of predictability and risk of ritual and play collide and there is predictable and unpredictable outcomes that rely on the interpersonal relationships developed throughout the extended time in which the service or performance is enacted. The artful facilitation of the experience to be simultaneously predictable and
spontaneous, safe and risky contributes the construction of symbolic meaning.

The essence of the interactions of the postmodern tribe at ‘The Famous’ can thus be regarded as ritualised performances of identity reinvention that become part of the story we tell ourselves about ourselves, and that makes up part of our ‘identity kit’ to use Goffman’s term (1959). By adopting the role of other the participants see themselves, and this opens the limitations of difference creating a leveling experience. As Abrahams argues, identifying the common aspects of an experience shared enables the ‘typical’ to be recognised; the repeated behaviour engaged in by individuals who find themselves in a similar situations. The repeated behaviour of the performance of other is normalised in the heterotopic environment at ‘The Famous’. The performance and consumption of other is the dominant form of being in this other space, and as established, the space is a crucial component to the co-creation of extraordinary experience. In the next section I discuss ‘The Famous’ as heterotopia focusing on the intangible, liminoid realm where the symbolic encounter with other is enacted.

**Heterotopia and liminoid experience at ‘The Famous’**

In the case of ‘The Famous its ephemerality is a key aspect to my claim that it is heterotopic. It is not enough to assert that the space is heterotopic because of its spatial configuration alone, it is the interrelation of the social and spatial, how the space is inhabited or ‘performed’ that makes it heterotopic. It sits between the binary poles of consumption and production, is inherently non-linear and locatable in the realm of the liminal. Dehaene and De Cauter (Dehaene & De Cauter, 2008) propose a general
theory of heterotopia that links closely to ritualised secular ‘time-space’. Drawing on ancient Greek urbanist Hippodamus’ theory of urban space, they argue that the space between public and private space is the third-space of the ‘cultural sphere’. Departing from Foucault’s assertion that the third-space of heterotopia is the mirror, Dehaene and De Cauter argue that the cultural sphere exists ‘in-between’ the public sphere of the agora, the ‘space of appearance’ and the private sphere of oikos, the hidden space of the household (Dehaene & De Cauter, 2008, p. 87). Three forms of life distinguish the activities between public and private space, the vita activa: one labour, two work and three action. Drawing on Arendt’s analysis of ancient Greece, they distinguish the place for each activity as follows; labour was private and associated with life and death; work was public associated with economic activity, action was public associated with political space and the construction of a good life is an ambiguous category that traverses the public-private realm (2008 p. 87). Importantly they identify an interesting discrepancy with these delineations, highlighting that artistic endeavour is grouped under the economic category of work. Dehaene argues that this omits the ritualistic origins of the ‘thinking of art’ or the cultural sphere as a space for consideration in the socio-spatial construction of society.

Dehaene argues that the third space of the cultural sphere corresponds with Hippodamus’ notion of the third-space. Ancient cities in Greece were separated into the oikos and agora, the acropolis (city) and the necropolis (cemetery). Dehaene and De Cauter identify an ‘intermediate space’ between these political and economic, private and public zones that is neither public nor private and stretches in-between these primary spaces.
These ‘other spaces’ include the theatre, stadium, hippodrome, gymnasium etc. These spaces exist in relation to the other spaces and are akin to sacred space, operating as ‘an-other’ to the political and economic (p. 90). Dehaene and De Cauter argue that this ‘in-between’ space is relevant to the contemporary notion of the cultural (secular) sphere and is the space of religion, arts, sports and leisure; they refer to it as, ‘the space of hidden appearance’. This general theory of heterotopia and third-space connects to three aspects of my analysis of ‘The Famous’; its links to medieval carnival, the ritualised approaches to performance that create symbolic meaning and its relationship to the liminal realm.

Bakhtin’s carnival was a space where the economic and social hierarchies were inverted using the festive mode of interaction. The purpose of carnival was for participants to step back from everyday life and enter a subjunctive or festive mode of being for ‘release and renewal’. The carnival is an example of the sacred or third space of heterotopia as it sits between the public and private, economical and political and yet contributes to the structure of society via its facilitation of symbolic experience.

Dehaene and De Cauter identify the significance of time in relationship to the third-space of heterotopia, suggesting that it “interrupts the continuity of space”, they explain, “Heterotopia is the counterpart of what an event is in time, an eruption, an apparition, an absolute discontinuity” (p. 90). Significantly ‘The Famous’ operates in this time-space sequence perpetually; whenever it arrives in a location its presence interrupts the continuity of the everyday space and its ordinary function. The place in which it is located temporarily becomes ‘somewhere else’, becoming another space where ‘The Famous’ ‘lives’. This dislocation of
space occurs every time it sets up in a new city. Dehaene and De Cauter link the housing of a temporary event in a specific place to the notion of hieratic ritual time and the ‘consecration’ of these specific buildings; church, theatre, stadium. Dehaene and De Cauter’s hypothesis contends “…many heterotopias were translated from event into building, from time to space, from a transient moment to the permanence of a place…” (p. 90). ‘The Famous’ is continually transforming as it travels the globe; each time it stops those who travels with it translate it again for the newcomers. In this sense ‘The Famous’ exists in a state of perpetual becoming. This other dimension is inherently heterotopic. When interviewed, Bates explains that each time the tent sets up they take a photo “On the steps looking back at the tent” (Appendix 2, Bates, personal communication, 2009), reinforcing the inward looking nature of experience, that looks back at itself to grow the narrative, rather than outward toward the city in which it is visiting.

Dehaene and De Cauter cite Foucault who refers to theatre as a coming together of two different spaces: the real space inhabited by the audience and the virtual space of the scene. When the performance starts the tension between the real and virtual blurs, the virtual becomes real and the real disappears (Dehaene & De Cauter citing Foucault, 2008, 1984). The reflexive cultural performances dissolve the separation between the ‘real’ world and the constructed world of the tent, and highlight its ‘space of hidden appearance’ or ‘third-space’. As Bates (2009) explains in an interview cut into A Tent and A Show:

It could be hot and 45 degrees outside (like in Adelaide) or freezing and -3 in Edinburgh, but the atmosphere inside the tent is always exactly the same…we could be anywhere. (Appendix 2, personal communication)
Dehaene and De Cauter argue that the theatrical event is the heterotopia par excellence, not the ship as Foucault asserts. It is both stable and unstable, it sits between public and private space and, “… releases all the force of the oxymoron ‘hidden appearance’” (2008, p. 93). The third-space embodies the liminal realm that facilitates liminoid experience. Participants cross the threshold into a space that is outside of the everyday, and partake in a series of gestures that include ‘partial experience’, moving the participants to the liminoid realm of play, the third-space of heterotopia epitomised by the tent. They no longer experience the event as an individual only; they share the experience of the group or community.

The key features of Van Gennep’s notion of “rites de passage” as discussed previously, incorporates the notion of play. Play is the fundamental activity in the third-space of heterotopia and to the creation of cultural narratives. The concept of performative interaction is distinguished by its relationship to play and restored behaviour. Dehaene interpreting Huizinga argues, “The act of playing not only creates space, but also requires a space and time entirely of its own. The magic circle is the basic spatial gesture that defines the space of play” (Dehaene citing Huizinga, p. 94). The boundary set by the space at ‘The Famous’ creates a distinction between inside and outside, exclusion and inclusion, between the game and ritual, between the festive mode and everyday life.

These interactions occur within a counter-site that unites Foucault’s principles of heterotopic space. Dehaene (2008) argues that society’s need to create thrilling spaces that instill imagination as a means of escape from the ‘real’, and heterotopias fulfill this space. ‘The Famous’ is an example of a social-spatial, performative heterotopia. The context and frame of the
events at the tent change over time. It juxtaposes multiple sites against one another, (the park, ‘The Spiegel Garden’, public and private space) and functions as a site within a site. It operates within the festive mode of event-generated ritualised time. It sets up a series of conventions and gestures that participants must engage in to enter. It has a function in relation to other spaces; it is simultaneously a place to be entertained, to escape the ‘real’ and engage with a community of other. Paradoxically the performative interaction sought by the postmodern tribe at ‘The Famous’ is to find authenticity through encounters with otherness. The authentic experience constructed at the tent creates a fissure between performers and spectators that ‘opens’ up space for shared experience through the ritual of playing the ‘as if’ of the space. By playing with the notion of authenticity, something new and real occurs between players: the co-creation of a performative fissure assists the transgression toward other via the blurring of role. Therefore I argue that the frame of the reconstructed carnival at ‘The Famous’, exemplifies how liminoid experience in the third space of heterotopia uses performative interaction to co-create cultural narratives, symbolic and meaningful experience and transformative experience of community founded in notions of transgression and otherness.
This chapter concludes my investigation about interactions between performers and spectators in fringe environments. I began with the question: How and why the interactions between spectators and performers at ‘The Famous’ are an example of transgressive experience? In this chapter I summarise my extension of transgression by highlighting the potential for participants to experience a partial transformation of self, activated by a temporary connection to the transient tribal community at ‘The Famous’. My research ranges across multiple aspects of performance analysis, through the study of the on stage and off stage interactions, and in my methodological approach. I use the central concept of performance as a means of communication and transformation, and performativity as the ‘doing’ and ‘being’ of identity.

As a researcher/practitioner, I am not separate from the practice of doing and being my research. My experiences as a spectator and practitioner are used reflexively throughout my thesis to illustrate how the concept of performativity transgresses the boundaries of performance, spectating, and research. My methodological approach has been circular, and required investigation using multiple methods, to make tacit knowledge explicit. The practice-led approach of constructing my research documentary, combined with the use of visual ethnography did not privilege an empirical approach, rather an experiential one. I brought my knowledge as an experienced professional theatre practitioner to the research as a method to validate the investigation of the complexity of spectator experience. Retrieving concepts
borrowed from performance theory, anthropology and consumer culture theory. The three branches that underpin my discussion of transgression in the context of the performative explore the spatial, social and cultural landscape at ‘The Famous’ and how these aspects simultaneously frame the experience. I have identified throughout my thesis that the spatial and performative boundaries are continually blurred at ‘The Famous’ and that this blurring is essential for the experience of transgression to occur.

My literature review establishes that La Clique at ‘The Famous’ is more than an entertaining circus/cabaret show programmed at a Fringe festival. I make the case that the significance of the event lies in the dynamic interrelationships formed between spectators and performers on and offstage, and in relationship to the unique space of the tent. Tracing the theatrical genealogy of popular entertainments, (in Chapters Three and Four), and their link to Bakhtin’s notion of carnival contextualises the scope, genre and porous boundaries, of performance at ‘The Famous’, (discussed in Chapters One and Two). The notion of fluid boundaries in performance highlights the unstable nature of popular entertainments such as circus, vaudeville, cabaret, and burlesque that consciously blur, and open boundaries between forms, and between spectator and performer. I established that cultural performance at ‘The Famous’ is a postmodern recreation of Bakhtin’s carnival. It celebrates the ‘otherness’ of the travelling carnival aesthetically and performatively using gender subversion, grotesque bodily transgressions and the disruption of the aesthetic distance maintained between audiences and performers in traditional theatre. These components frame this cultural performance situated on the edge of the urban arts landscape, in the heart of the Fringe festival theatrescape.
Articulating the tendency of postmodern performance to blur artistic genres, and the blurring of boundaries between spectating and performing was also made explicit in my research documentary, reflexively addressed in my methodological approach in Chapter Five, and analysed in the discussion in Chapter Six.

The extraordinary experience of performance (as discussed in Chapter Six) at ‘The Famous’ epitomises what the postmodern consumer is seeking when visiting immersive servicescapes - a meaningful connection to others. The combination of the aesthetic and performative frame constructed at the tent, located within the Fringe, opened up space for playful interaction between participants in the liminal realm. An experience at ‘The Famous’ immerses all participants in a ‘world’ that is ‘other’ from everyday life and relies on the tacit agreement by participants to engage in play. Using Carroll’s notion of theatrical role-distance, the crew adopt a performative style of interaction to carry out mundane tasks. They adopt a role, which is an extension of their own identities as artificial circus travellers to serve drinks, collect tickets, and move spectators along in the queue outside the tent. The performative interaction keys the spectators to play along with the ‘as if’ of the frame of the environment. The frame encourages participants to play ‘as if’ they are in simulacra of bohemian, cabaret and carnival otherness. I have presented the case that the performers draw on the genealogy of performance traditions I have established (in Chapters Three and Four) to create a cultural narrative about the tent’s history. In Chapter Three and Four I emphasised the strong links to transgression and the traditions of popular entertainments to articulate that these notions of performance underpin the sense of otherness, sought by the spectators and
performers. They are seeking to entertain or be entertained but become ‘other’ without knowing how, and it is only in this ‘other’ state the symbolic experience or the ‘magic’ experience happens. The combination of the performance traditions represented onstage in *La Clique*, and the performative interactions by the crew offstage, enacted in an original antique Belgian mirror tent contributes to the notion of ‘authentic’ experience, also sought by the postmodern consumer, (as discussed in Chapter Six).

The extended performative encounters at the tent open boundaries between performers and spectators. The boundary open encounters stimulate emotional connection and the formation of relationships, and as proven, relationships form through extended encounters with the service provider, (in this case, the performers and crew at ‘The Famous’), and this forms the basis for the experience of community to occur. Relationships and a sense of community are co-created by participants when the environment is authentically framed, and therefore the experience has the potential to become extraordinary via the notion of metaxis. Metaxis, the reflexive experience of seeing and performing notions of self via the partial performance of other, is a crucial component for the experience of performance to transform into something ‘extraordinary’.

I achieved this by retrieving performative concepts from CCT and re-examining them through the lens of performance theory to analyse my experience as a spectator at ‘The Famous’ from a new perspective. I used a combination of the following concepts to investigate what the postmodern consumer is seeking in servicescapes that are also performance environments: authenticity, meaningful and extraordinary experience, the
staging of experience, open and closed encounters, and partial experience or the co-creation of service. The postmodern consumer at ‘The Famous’ encounters all of the elements listed above, and I have presented the case that these factors combined create meaningful and extraordinary experience for both spectator and performer. The partial experience of an-other’s role embodied by the blurring of role between performing and spectating sits at the centre of this experience. The authentic encounter and subsequent performance of other is framed so that metaxis occurs and the connection with an-other community begins to form. Through my research I have demonstrated that the blurring of role is a how and why the experience of transgression occurs at ‘The Famous’. The outcome of the transgression toward other sits in the realm of symbolic experience. Retrieving concepts of performance and anthropology from CCT literature, I also analysed what I contend is a symbolic encounter with other at ‘The Famous’, and in Chapter Six I illustrated the specific elements including ritual processes that occur within the liminal realm that contribute to liminoid experience.

When editing my research documentary I started the process of deconstructing the behaviour of the performers on and off stage. I identified and categorised words and phrases repeatedly used to describe the experience at the tent by the interviewees. These included references to what was broadly identified as “the spiegeltent aesthetic”. This referred to the aesthetic beauty of the tent as interpreted by the performers. As discussed in Chapter Five, they link the beauty of the tent to its design and historical origins as an illustration of the art deco movement in design and performance discussed in Chapter One. The aesthetic is also linked to its performative past in the travelling carnival and a blurring of the tradition of
popular entertainments, discussed in Chapters Three and Four. They also used the descriptor, the “Spiegel aesthetic” to describe the informal dress code exhibited by performers and adopted by spectators to form the temporary community and co-create a new cultural narrative about the tent. In the interviews I observed that the owner and crew anthropomorphised the tent, referring to it as a “she” or a “Grande Dame”. They alluded to “ghosts” that contribute to its “history” and as a “being” that has had a “life, one that will continue after their association with it ceases”. These aspects of the cultural narrative features in marketing materials including the official website, press interviews and editorial. Other phrases used to describe the experience at the tent included: “the experience”, “authentic”, “real”, “a total experience” and “frame”, further demonstrating how the language used to describe the tent contributed to my analysis of the symbolic meaning of the performative interactions. The use of these phrases also demonstrates why my research traverses concepts drawn from CCT and performance studies. My analysis of these interviewees and the phrases used to describe the tent contributed to my assertion that the behaviour exhibited by performers, and then adopted by spectators, draws on ritual processes as means to communicate and co-create symbolic meaning. The boundary open encounter that occurs via the performative interaction creates an emotional connection and why this leads to symbolic experience of other is summarised in the next section.

At ‘The Famous’ the boundary open encounter is what stimulates participants to feel an emotional connection with the person who is showing them to their seat, someone who in conventional theatre they may not pay attention to. The performance moves beyond the confines of the circus ring,
canvas tent or auditorium and connects with ‘others’ onstage. The interaction onstage at the tent is part of what makes it a cultural performance, and cultural performance sits in the realm of the symbolic. The symbolic realm uses the festive mode of interaction, whereby notions of ritual intersect with the abandonment of everyday life within the framed environment at the tent and the Fringe festival. I introduced the notion of the liminal realm at ‘The Famous’ in Chapter One, and it is explained in more depth in Chapter Six. As established in these chapters, at ‘The Famous’ ritual processes encompass notions playful behaviour designed to co-create what I argued becomes an extraordinary experience. Performers and spectator express this experience as a transgression toward otherness via the partial experience of the blurring of role. In Chapter One I introduced transgression and the liminoid zone of experience, within the realm of the tent, and in Chapters Five and Six demonstrated that the liminoid zone is a part of the heterotopic dimension at ‘The Famous’. I argued that the convergence between the spatial environment and the performative interaction among participants occurs in liminal space and is an example of liminoid experience.

‘The Famous’ reconstructs and re-presents the subversive space of the carnival using ironic references and self-referential signing inviting spectators to play along. This re-creation of an-other space, is an example of “thrilling space” (Dehaene & De Cauter, 2008, p. 54), a place for performers and spectators to transgress, step-over, across the threshold of the tent toward an embodied or lived experience of other. This embodied experience is what differentiates performances that draw from popular entertainments from main stage theatre performance. Drawing on Dehaene
and De Cauter, I determined that “The Famous” operates as a heterotopian ‘third-space’ where participants interact with performance influenced by Abraham’s notion of extraordinary experience (Abrahams, 2001). At ‘The Famous’ Dehaene and De Cauter’s (2008) ‘third-space’, (discussed in the previous chapter), is akin to the liminal realm: it encompasses notions of play, it is distinct from everyday life, and it has a limen (threshold) which spectators cross to enter the space. The limen signifies entry to an-other space that governs the frame of play. At ‘The Famous’, the third space of play is where emotional and symbolic experience occurs through performative interaction, and this form of play is how cultural narratives are constructed over time. In the case of La Clique at ‘The Famous’, the event is influenced by the way in which the performers frame the space and the experience of the performance for spectators and how spectators inhabit the visual terrain as potential collaborators (Simpson Stern & Henderson, 1993). The co-creation of cultural narratives about the tent occurs through play, and fosters a sense of ownership toward the tent by the people who work there and visit it. Meyerhoff (1984) asserts that ritual processes such as the formation of cultural narratives about place creates symbolic artifacts that embody cultural meaning for groups to form attachment to. At ‘The Famous’ the performers continually co-create the narrative with each new spectator. In this sense ‘The Famous’ is always being reconstructed and performance at the tent is therefore experienced in the past, present and future. McAuley argues that the multiple other spaces represented by a stage make it a non-place and that this freedom to reinvent itself facilitates its transition into ‘other places’ (McAuley, 2005). I made the case that the stage in ‘The Famous’ will always be ‘The Famous’ when presenting La
La Clique, however it brings with it memory traces of the theatrical frame of the cabaret and carnival performances of its origin. In this sense, it represents the otherness of the past colliding with the present, a marking of history that sees the performative ghosts of the past meeting ‘new’ ghosts co-created in the present. The convergence of past and present enables the performers and spectators at the tent to experience La Clique at ‘The Famous’ in a potentially transformative way directly influenced by the frame of its performative history. The aesthetic of the mirror-lined tent evokes ‘memories’ of 1920s bohemia or a visit to the circus, and the ‘remembering’ of experience is in fact not a real memory at all. It is a nostalgic simulacrum of Weimar cabaret, blurred with the spirit of the travelling carnival and the vaudevillian performer/spectator dynamic of call and response. “The Famous’ is a real place but there is no official historical record of the performances that occurred in the space from when it was first built and began travelling throughout the northern part of Belgium in the late 1920s, until it was hired as a venue for the Edinburgh Book and Jazz Festivals in the late 1980s. My research fills a gap in the continuum of its performance history by researching and locating it within the lineage of performative traditions linked to carnival and Fringe.

In my research the past is described as an experience that links ‘authentic’ histories- people, space and performances. While the performative traditions of carnival, popular entertainments and its art-deco aesthetic contribute to the reconstruction of an experience of the past; the present is experienced via the partial adoption of the role of other – or transgression. The lines between past, present and future are blurred, and the blurriness is part of what defines the tent as reconstructed carnival; its
influence blurs notions of circus, cabaret, vaudeville and burlesque performance in a fringe environment. The blurriness is intrinsic and enables the experience to be continually reconstructed and experienced as a symbolic artifact. It becomes symbolic due to the combination of co-created narrative through embodied experiences enacted using ritual processes. The collaboration between performers, spectators and space de-centres the performer as the central component of the performance and is redolent of the trend in postmodern new circus performance as articulated by Tait, and discussed in Chapter Four. The interaction with the space as symbolic artifact is also evocative of the continuing practice of locating theatre performances outside traditional theatre buildings and in the social spaces of the community. This creates relationships between a place, its history, the spectators and performers (Filmer, 2006, p. 17).

At ‘The Famous’ the interactions between the spectators, performers and space echo Schechner’s notion of viewing space as a ‘living entity’ (Schechner, 1973). This idea is similar to Meyerhoff’s concept of the symbolic artifact, whereby the narrative about the space is co-created by its aesthetic and by the ritual processes attached to the interpretation of it. Filmer argues, places play an active and complex role in the formation of memory, and function to ‘hold’ events over significant periods of time (Filmer, 2006). The mirrors in the tent embody Schechner’s notion of space as a ‘living entity’ by authenticating the participant’s experience. The performances framed and captured by the mirrors ‘tell’ the participants that they temporarily belong in the community reflected in this other realm. The heterotopia created by the mirror (as discussed in Chapters Four and Six) is another dimension of the ‘living entity’ that is ‘The Famous’; it is an-other
space where the performance of other exists. The mirror is a heterotopia for it is real and unreal, exists in relation to the actual space of the tent, and it reflects the metaxis of the spectator /performer experience of otherness. As Foucault (2008) explains, the heterotopia of the mirror reflects:

…where I am not, in an unreal space that virtually opens up behind the surface…I am over there where I am not…a shadow gives me my own visibility that enables me to see myself there where I am absent.

(p. 17)

The mirrors play an important part in shaping the co-creation of memory for they represent, reflect and resemble aspects of the performer/spectator experience aesthetically and performatively. Lit by theatrical lighting, the mirrors establish a visual and material link to the fin de siècle period of art nouveau design. The 1920s are also associated with the radical cabaret performances of Weimar Germany, the second explosion of burlesque in Britain and the height of the mass popularity of American vaudeville. The ghosting of this performative and aesthetic past sets up a trigger for participants to ‘remember’ or ‘play’ at remembering a period of decadence in design, performance and culture. The blurring of history and the conflation of time-periods is a hallmark of the postmodern tendency to pastiche the past and contributes to the subsequent blurring of role that occurs between performers and spectators. I determined that the mirrored interior of ‘The Famous’ adds another dimension to the space, enabling it to “have its say” more so than other spaces. The mirrors in the space ‘show’ the participants their experience, capturing the performative embodiment of the partial other, in the other space of the mirror. The ‘showing’ is a retrieval of, or re-telling of self as other, manifested as restored behaviour, and this extends the reflexive potential of playing through performance. The
‘showing’ of experience in this manner deepens the experience of metaxis and adds complexity to my claim that the tent and the mirrors constitute heterotopia.

Transgressing into other spaces: Heterotopias and liminoid experience

Throughout this research I have drawn on Goffman’s (1959, 1975) notion of frame to interpret the social, spatial, and performative experience of my own experience as spectator. My analysis focuses on the notion of frame from three points of view: the theatrical framing of La Clique at ‘The Famous’ as an example of performance with historic links to transgression; the aesthetic frame of the tent as an authentic servicescape; and the performative frame of ‘other’ embodied by the crew who manage the tent.

In seeking to explain the underlying structure of social encounters, Goffman (1975) uses notions of play as metaphorical and illustrative examples of everyday interactions. For Goffman, the serious aspects of play are illuminated by the rules to which participants adhere when agreeing to interact. The frame determines the rules and the degree to which one commits to the ‘game’ and governs the nature of the encounter and the experience. At ‘The Famous’, the unspoken rules are followed by those who gravitate to Fringe festival spaces to share encounters with like-minded others through culture and performance, and “the degree of involvement by participants is what sustains the play frame” (1975 p. 95). Goffman explains:

… all frames involve expectations of a normative kind as to how deeply and fully the individual is to be carried into the activity organised by the frames. (p. 95)
If the frame is sufficiently well established participants can become carried away with the flow of the game becoming fully engrossed in the activity. Goffman argues that focused activity is what permits a state of engrossment to ensue. This happens when individuals actively demonstrate their willingness to commit to the frame of the encounter or to display their “aliveness-to-the-situation”. This opens up the potential for spontaneous interactions to occur (Goffman, 1975, p. 346). Spontaneity is a crucial part of the play process, when the play world becomes a complete place unto itself, and the world beyond the frame temporarily ceases to exist.

At ‘The Famous’ the transgression towards otherness via the blurring of role is an example of spontaneous play. This state is marked by a spontaneous interaction between performers and spectators signified by ritual gestures that facilitate a liminoid encounter. Paradoxically the performative interactions involve a series of carefully constructed steps that are spontaneous and linked to play and therefore the liminoid zone of experience. These include; the crossing of a threshold or separation from everyday life; the engagement by spectators with a series of ‘rules’ that govern the nature of the play; and the identification of a play space or ‘engrossable’ state. Positioning ‘The Famous’ as a type of heterotopia was reinforced through the concept of liminality, and I have linked what I identify as the liminoid realm to the immersive servicescapes sought by the postmodern consumer, (discussed in Chapter Six). I identified a parallel between the ‘experiential’ servicescape of CCT theory, the liminoid realm and the notion of *communitas*. These concepts provided the context for my deconstruction of the complex performative interaction between spectators and performers, in which I demonstrate that a transformative experience
occurs for participants because of the confluence between the rehearsed and spontaneous performances that occur on and off stage. The combination of a programmed performance framed by the spatial and temporal landscape of the Fringe sets the scene for the ‘partial experience’ to happen.

The construction of ‘partial experience’ is central to my theory of transgression. The performative frame opens boundaries that separate spectators from performers and invites a blurring of role. In the previous chapter I discussed the boundary-open encounter as explained by Price et al. that fosters a sense of connection, perceived as friendship, between producer and consumer or spectator and performer creating a pathway for connection that links transgression to the notion of communitas. The boundary between performing and spectating is opened in the liminoid realm created by the frame of performative interaction, stimulated by playful encounters between participants. I have made the case that opening this boundary enables the role shift to occur. Roles are transgressed as participants adopt the partial behaviour of the ‘other’ creating a shared experience of otherness. This temporary transformation is what creates a sense of community or communitas that temporarily blurs ‘self’ and disrupts perceptions of otherness. The transgressive behaviour does not deny or limit boundaries (Jenks, 2003); it exceeds them, therefore satisfying the postmodern consumers’ desire for community created through meaningful encounters. I drew the parallel between the blurring of role between consumer and producer in everyday service environments where the consumer is encouraged to actively shape their own experience of the service by ‘doing’ it themselves, and the producer co-consumes (or co-constructs) the service with the consumer. At the tent the same experience is constructed;
spectators and performers experience partial otherness as the line between performing and spectating crosses over itself. The partial experience of the other’s role opens the boundary between ‘doing’ and ‘being’, between watching and participating, between performing and spectating. Role shifting activates the rupture between being and doing, and consumers/spectators partially perform and producers/performers consume a partial experience of spectating. This reinterpretation of the notion of partial experience, as the partial adoption of the role of other, illustrates how and why the performative interactions at the tent exemplify transgression. The transgressive encounter occurs in a flow space that is outside of everyday interactions because it has opened up boundaries that separate the roles of performing and spectating through play.

Through my research I have demonstrated that at the tent, the identification of a limit enables transgression to occur in multiple ways and paradoxically the limit constantly shifts. A literal ‘limit’ is identified when participants ‘cross the threshold’ to enter The Spiegel Garden and when they mount the steps of ‘The Famous’ to enter its interior. Participants also cross a metaphorical threshold when they agree to engage in the playful performative rituals of spectator and performer. The limit or boundary between spectator and performer continually shifts back and forth, and the limit is crossed and recrossed as the playful interactions are spontaneously explored. The boundary opens between spectators and performers during the extended period of the performance, and that is the experience of ‘The Famous’. The play of limits and boundary-open encounters start outside the tent and continue as spectators and performers interact inside the space, throughout the show, and afterwards in The Spiegel Garden, at the bar, on
the dance floor and onstage. The limit that separates the spectator from performer and performer from spectator blurs, disappears, reappears, and becomes an affirmation of shared experience. This blurred space is the liminoid zone of betwixt and between. Participants interact in an-other space that encompasses performing and spectating. The opening of the boundary breaks the rules that separate the spectator from the performer in conventional theatre. Drawing on the transgressive conventions of popular entertainments new limits are identified, crossed and recrossed.

Foucault’s concept of transgression inherently connects to the notion of a limit or boundary, as he explains:

> Transgression is an action, which involved the limit, the narrow zone of a line where it displays the flash of its passage, but perhaps also its entire trajectory, even its origin; it is likely transgression has its entire space in the line it crosses. (Foucault & Bouchard, 1980, p. 33)

In my research I identified the edge where the limit exists, where it blurs and opens from a new perspective. Participants at ‘The Famous’ identify a limit by recognising themselves in the other through performative interactions. The recognition of a limit by participants and the subsequent disruption of this limit illustrates that transgression is “… a dynamic force in cultural reproduction- it prevents stagnation, by breaking the rule and it ensures stability by reaffirming the rule” (Jenks, 2003, p. 8). The playful role shifts parallel the release and renewal of the carnival impulse, celebrating disorder and reinforcing the status quo. As Jenks asserts every rule carries its own “fracture or impulse to disobey”, so it follows that transgression is the natural opposite of the rule (p.8). The structured and spontaneous performative interactions at ‘The Famous’ embody the urge to ‘fracture’ everyday behaviour.
Foucault’s contention is that transgression “… forces the limit to face the fact of its imminent disappearance, to find itself in what it excludes (perhaps to be more exact to recognise itself for the first time” (Foucault & Bouchard, p. 34), illustrating my reinterpretation of transgression, informed by the concept of partial experience that spectators expect to participate in a performance of ‘otherness’ when visiting the tent. Participation is an accepted component of cultural performance and the Fringe festival experience. My contribution extends this view to argue that performers also take part in the transgression or blurring of role to experience otherness. Foucault argues that perhaps transgression is “…an affirmation of division; but only in so far as division is not understood to mean a cutting gesture, or the establishment of a separation or the measuring of a distance, only retaining that which may designate the existence of difference” (p. 36).

When performers see themselves reflected back in the partial performance of the spectator, a pathway to transcend the limit is opened. The affirmation of the division between spectating and performing through the blurring of role is an acknowledgement and acceptance of difference, as the performer becomes the spectator of an-other performance, one that is both a reflection of self and other. The adoption of otherness by the performer is not just represented by the role they play as an usher, burlesque comedian or contortionist. The performers adopt the role of partial spectator. They ‘recognise’ themselves in the performance of the spectator for the first time. The recognition of self through the recognition of other opens boundaries by continually crossing and recrossing the limit between performing and spectating. The performer is now spectating on a version of self and other transgressing the line between performing, spectating, being and doing from
a new perspective. As I have made clear previously this transformation moves the performer beyond the structured and scripted realm of performance into the liminoid realm of the ludic.

**Methodological reflections**

My research documentary highlighted my multi-method approach by evidencing the multiple roles I engaged in to investigate my experience as a spectator, researcher and performer. As explained in Chapter Five, the process of assembling a rough cut using a combination of interviews, excerpts from *La Clique* combined with archival footage, and the subsequent process of editing several iterations of the research documentary changed the trajectory of my research. It became an investigation and reconstruction of my experience as a spectator. The complex interwoven and practice-led process of editing and researching enabled me to recontextualise notions of transgression and performance. This process also created the critical distance I needed to reinterpret my experience from artist/spectator visiting the tent, to researcher analysing the performative environment. The interplay between writing about performance and reviewing the experience of performance applying visual methodologies enabled me to analyse the social and spatial interactions at the tent using performative methods. I used the concepts of performativity, aesthetics and reflexivity to analyse the performative process of constructing and interpreting the research documentary. Reading the social dynamics using performance theory, sociology, anthropology and consumer culture theory facilitated the emergence of my understanding of transgression and performance at ‘The Famous’ as an experience of otherness. The process of writing, editing and researching helped me to identify the limits that
distinguish researcher from practitioner and self from other, and to observe the blurriness between these roles. Using reflexivity I was able to identify the blurring of role that I experienced at the tent shifting from an experience as spectator to a partial experience of the role of performer. At the start of my research I transitioned from spectator to researcher, finding critical distance during this process to look back at my experience. As I moved more deeply into editing my research documentary incorporating notions of reflexivity, influenced by performative documentary making, I observed another blurring of role from researcher to practitioner. These roles continually blurred and shifted as I moved from one form of research to the next— from writing to reading, to editing, and back again. I interpret this blurring of role toward other parts of myself as another example of how my investigation of transgression permeates my thesis. It illustrates my own experience of transgression toward otherness via the blurring of role as between being and doing, analysing and creating.

My contribution to knowledge emerges through my research practices applying practice-led methods and methodologies to research in the disciplines of theatre and performance, anthropology and consumer culture theory. Baz Kershaw and Helen Nicolson assert that by examining the ‘troubled boundaries’ between creative practice and critical analysis, and ontology and epistemology, practice-led research can actively continue to contribute to inter-disciplinary studies that use notions of ‘liveness’ as a basis for research practice (Kershaw & Nichollson, 2011, p. 2). The question of documentation is central to research into live performance and my research process exemplifies the central concerns of the researcher/practitioner that explore the tensions between archival and
creative work. Video documentation, like live performance, is a form of dissemination and more recently argued to be a form of publication (Bruzzi, 2000). Rather than existing in tension with one another as Auslander (2008, p. 41) has articulated, my use of video documentation in relation to live performance has used techniques influenced by performative documentary to direct my eye to specific aspects of the spectator/performer experience. Using a practice-led approach to the documentation and subsequent interpretation of live alternative performance adds a visual component to my research that aided my understanding of performance beyond the scripted action onstage. This understanding was achieved through each cut of the research documentary. The techniques I used were drawn from avant-garde cinema, conventional documentary and performative documentary as a method to explore my interpretation of the concepts of performativity, spectatorship, and transgression.

My research was influenced by Denzin’s (1997) concept of the postmodern ‘sixth moment’ of the 1990s, which was marked by the rapid evolution of digital technology made accessible for use by the amateur filmmaker. Denzin argues that the sixth moment invites a blurring of national identities and boundaries. In this digital space I was both tourist and immigrant. My decision to use digital technologies for creative research was representative of a paradigm shift in the academy, which increasingly recognises and values practice-led research and creative works applied to research outcomes (Zukin, 1995). I adopted the role of the ‘immigrant’ documentarian, using editing techniques that enabled my research documentary to highlight specific aspects of my spectator experience. Simultaneously I performatively and reflexively signaled my presence as
researcher in the documentary. Denzin paraphrases Patricia Clough to argue that a reflexive form of writing that turns ethnographic and theoretical texts ‘back onto each other’ (1997, p. 62) is what is needed in the postmodern moment. This is what I explored in my performative research documentary and the related discussion throughout this thesis. The research documentary and written thesis are dialogic. The literature review speaks to the documentary, which speaks back to the thesis, which, in turn, speaks to the methods used and the methodologies applied for the purpose of analysis.

The visual text evokes the themes embedded in the written text and the written text deconstructs and comments on the visual text. I acknowledge the circular, unstable nature of these processes, and that they challenge what Baz Kershaw and Helen Nicolson refer to as ‘outmoded’ perceptions that method and methodology must include processes that ‘capture, codify and categorise knowledge’ (1995, p. 1). Stephen Tyler (1986) argues for a ‘new’ ethnography, one that is evocative rather than indexical. Therefore, I set out to create a research documentary (Appendix 2) that is evocative of my ‘remembering’ my own experience by reconstructing the words of the interviewees and the associated footage of the tent I examined specific elements that contributed to the research questions that arose from encountering otherness at ‘The Famous’.

Documenting and analyzing the lived experience of live performance from a spectator perspective is inherently representational, it can never be the ‘real experience’. My purpose was to reconstruct aspects of the experience to understand how they contributed to the formation of communitas and transgression. Specifically, I asked myself: Are the cultural interactions framed at the tent transgressive?
In my research as, Mascia-Lees and Sharpe assert, I could not speak for somebody else (2000, p. 40). I could not talk with authority about others experience of La Clique at The Famous Spiegeltent. The strength of the participatory nature of Tyler’s view of ethnography is that it has the potential to unite the voices of the ethnographer, participants and reader. Yes, the ultimate voice is mine, but it is informed directly by the research participants who self-identify as ‘others’. As Mascia-Lees and Sharpe argue, I am maintaining the positioning of these ‘others’ as marginal, and in doing so, maintaining dominant views pertaining to gender and race. However by investigating these self-identified performative ‘others’ (who deliberately situate themselves outside of mainstream theatrical institutions) I am interrogating the way contemporary performance can transgress social and cultural boundaries. Therefore, editing the interviews into a research documentary does not solely privilege my voice; it includes my voice in a continuing dialogue about the transgressive role performative interaction at the reconstructed carnival that is the Fringe festival plays in Australian cultural production.

Choosing visual and performance ethnography to articulate my experiences signals to the reader that I have personalized my research and worked toward representing methods that, as Denzin explains, are “auto ethnographic, vulnerable, performative and critical” (1997, p. 510). The challenge and paradox is that, whilst attempting to shape a poly-vocal text, my emergent process still privileges the voice of the researcher to some degree. In seeking a method that moves away from the notion of a single unified voice, I encountered three challenges. The first of these challenges, to find the appropriate voice and tone to use for each component of the
research, problematised my practice-led approach. Despite using aesthetic choices drawn from performative documentary techniques that experiment with point of view such as fragmentation of text, metaphor, repetition and juxtaposition, my attempt to demonstrate a heteroglossic approach ultimately used one voice to unify the whole. The second challenge involved traversing the landscape between the personalised voices of the participant observer to the more formalized voice of the analytical researcher. This made it difficult to create a coherent narrative that acknowledged poly-vocality. (Mascia-Lees & Sharpe, 2000, p. 40).

Shoshana Felman (1997) argues that new ethnography is a manipulative method whereby the author’s voice is not heard directly, yet still pervades the research outcomes. I have used a reflexive approach to address this critique of interpretive approaches to ethnography drawing on the performative mode of documentary as outlined in depth in Chapter Five (Bruzzi, 2000). The third challenge was related to my approach to aesthetics. Ethnography is reliant on an aesthetic style that aims to highlight the use of multiple points of view. This approach is questioned by Mascia-Lees and Sharpe citing Jonathon Friedman (from a Marxist perspective) and Judith Stacey (from a feminist perspective) who argue that the postmodernist’s reliance on ‘intratextual’, rather than intertextual, approaches can silence the voice of participants. These theorists argue that the ‘intratextual’ text can, in its attempt to recapture a participant’s experience, neutralise their experience with one voice unifying multiple approaches (Mascia-Lees & Sharpe, 2000). I have addressed this by attempting to create a relationship between the research documentary and the concepts explored throughout the thesis, using an interdisciplinary
approach to methodology and analysis. While the thesis and accompanying research documentary might not have created a poly-vocal text, it did result in a deeply dialogic research process whereby the creative methods intersected with the analytical methods to authentically analyse live performance. Consequently, my discussion of postmodernist approaches to ethnographic practices helped me problematise my methods, and consolidated my contribution to knowledge to the fields of inter-disciplinary practice-led research in performance and theatre.

In my quest to answer my research question I established an innovative approach to the methods I used led by the desire to stimulate dialogue between creative and critical practices. Throughout the process my understanding of my identity as a practitioner/researcher necessarily blurred as I navigated my way between artistic practice and research, thus extending my understanding of how a dialogue can occur between creativity and analysis using a combination of methods and methodologies. To traverse disciplines, combine skills and find synergies in practice-led research is a challenging task. However, by acknowledging that cross-disciplinary work often influences the creative practice of making live performance it seems possible that encouraging interaction between research and creative practice may encourage more dialogue about the value and relevance of this style of research to the field (Zukin, 1995, 1998).

Finally I return once more to my research question. How does the transgression toward otherness happen, when does it take place and what transpires? As demonstrated throughout my research, the performative and spatial frame profoundly affects the relationship between spectators and performers. The effective framing of performance has the potential to open
up spectators and performers to an embodied experience of otherness that is transformative on multiple levels. I have clearly demonstrated that the most significant aspect of this transformation is the transgression toward otherness via the blurring of role between performing and spectating. The blurring of role enables participants to experience otherness stimulated by performance as play. The performative interaction in this liminoid zone operates in a heterotopic dimension, an-other space where the shared experience of otherness is co-created. This transgression toward otherness is an example of metaxis, whereby the reflexive experience of adopting the partial role of other transforms the experience of the individual to the experience of the group, creating community. Therefore, the transgression into otherness experienced by participants at ‘The Famous’ is an example how cultural performance that uses popular entertainments can authenticate notions of self and community.
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APPENDIX

A Tent and A Show: A research documentary about The Famous Spiegeltent and La Clique

Format: DVD

Running Time: 20 minutes

This research documentary is strictly for research purposes only and not for commercial broadcast. Third-party images, music and archival footage sourced under Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike (3.0). All rights reserved by the author under the Copyright Act, 1968 and Fair Dealing for the purpose of research or study (s.103C).

Credits

Writer, Producer & Editor: Kate Smith

Research supervisor: Associate Professor Jane Mills

Technical support: Phil Glenn

Editing Assistants: Luke Aguirre & Thomas Druitt, Brendan Cooper and James Arrow

Images: Sourced under Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike (3.0)

Archival footage: Adapted from A Man With A Movie Camera (1929) and Nanook of the North (1922) Sourced under Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike (3.0)

“I Wanna Be Loved” performed Broadway Nitelites sourced under Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike (3.0)
The Famous Spiegeltent at Adelaide Fringe festival 2006 supplied
by Carnival Cinema

With thanks: Sydney Festival, 2009, the research participants
including cast, crew and fans of The Famous Spiegeltent

Owner: David Bates

Creative Producer/Emcee: Brett Haylock

House Manager/s: Simon Barfoot & Shoshanna Orenstein

Emcee La Clique: Mikey Martens

Guest Director, La Clique: Flick Ferdinando

Cabaret artistes: Kaye Tuckerman, Jesse Griffin & Drew Fairley

Spectator: Lucy Bradridge

Artistic Director Circus Oz: Mike Finch

Documentarist: Hamish McCormick
APPENDIX 2.

Interview questions

What is your name?

What is your role at The Famous Spiegeltent?

Your age

Do you have a background in performance?

THE FAMOUS SPIEGELTENT

How did you come to be part of The Famous Spiegeltent?

Can you describe/remember the first time you went there?

How many seats are there?

How are they arranged?

Who gave you a job?

Who do you work with?

Do you travel with The Famous Spiegeltent?

Where does it travel?

How long have you worked there?

Can you describe the tent?

Describe your job.

If not, do you consider the way you do your job a performance?

Have you done more than one job?

What do you wear when you are working?
Is this uniform or a costume?

What is it that attracts spectators to ‘The Famous’?

What do they expect when they arrive?

What do you give them?

Why do they return?

Why do people dress up?

What do they wear?

Is ‘The Famous’ Australian? Why/Why not?

**LA CLIQUE**

How would you describe *La Clique*?

What genre is it?

How long does it run?

How was the show put together?

How long has it run?

Where has it been?

How many acts are there?

How do spectators react to *La Clique* onstage?

How do spectators react when people at the door interact with them?

What do spectators expect when they see *La Clique*?

Do you think *La Clique* is Australian? Why/Why not?

How much is a ticket?
Interviewees

Recorded on video and/or via email.


Flick Ferdinando, January, 2008, Sydney

Lucy Bradridge, January 2008, Sydney

Kaye Tuckerman, January 2008, Sydney

Drew Fairley, January, 2008, Sydney

Mike Finch, March, 2009, Melbourne

Simon Barfoot, March 2009, Melbourne

Shoshanna Orenstein, March 2009, Melbourne

Jesse Griffin, March 2009, Melbourne

Hamish McCormick, March 2009, Melbourne

Brett Haylock, March 2006, Adelaide Fringe (archival footage) and email interview September 2009.