

# CHAPTER THREE

## THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

*“‘Reading...seems to constitute the maximal development **of** the passivity assumed to characterize the consumer, who is conceived **of as** a voyeur (whethertroglodytic **or** itinerant) in a ‘showbiz society’.”*

*“In reality, the activity **of** reading has on the contrary all the characteristics **of** a silent production: the drift **across** the page, the metamorphosis **of** the text effected by the wandering .eyes**of** the reader, **the** improvisation and expectation **of** meanings inferred from a few words, leaps over written spaces in an ephemeral dance.”*

de Certeau, 1984, p. xxi

*“In order to understand, it **is** immensely important**for the** person who understands to be located outside the object of his **or** her creative understanding—in time, in space, in culture. **For** one cannot even really see one’s own exterior and comprehend it **as** a whole, and no mirrors **or** photographs can help; **our** real exterior can be seen and understood only by other people, because they are located outside us in space and because they are others.”*

Bakhtin, 1986a, p. 7

### 3.1 Overview of the chapter

To this point, I have identified the problem with which this thesis is concerned as being what the Queensland show children's educational provision reveals about the intersection of education and marginalisation, resistance and transformation, as well as about broader issues in Australian Traveller education. The research questions guiding the analysis of the materials gathered to address this problem focus on three dimensions of the show people's lives arising from their itinerancy: their marginalisation, and their resistance and eventual transformation of that marginalised status. The literature reviewed in Chapter Two centred on two topics: Australian shows; and Traveller education. This study was posited as a counternarrative or 'alternative story' to traditional and debilitating stereotypes about itinerant people, particularly Australian show people, and as thereby contributing significantly to, and in some cases departing radically from, the existing literature.

The function of this chapter is to delineate the main elements in the thesis's conceptual framework, and in the process to suggest ways of conceptualising a reinvigorated Traveller education. In doing so, I seek to move beyond the either/or positions identified in the previous chapter: positions within which show people are commonly constructed as passive 'others' or de Certeauian exotics. The chapter consists of three sections:

- Michel de Certeau's concept of 'tactics of consumption'
- Mikhail Bakhtin's notions of 'outsidedness' and 'creative understanding'

- a synthesis of the conceptual framework guiding this thesis.

At this point I should emphasise that the selection and synthesis of these conceptual resources is neither accidental nor incidental. On the contrary, I demonstrate throughout this chapter that the conceptual framework has been chosen precisely because of its capacity to frame and inform my responses to the research questions cited above. From this perspective, the conceptual framework is an integral element of a coherent and consistent approach to understanding the educational experiences and opportunities of Queensland show people.

Specifically, I argued at the end of the previous chapter that this study is located directly in the ‘middle ground’ between two equally unhelpful ‘logical extremes’ evident in the literature about itinerant people and Traveller education. Those two extremes were identified as an ‘unproblematic othering’ and an ‘unproblematic celebration’ of itinerancy, whereby itinerancy is constructed respectively as inherently ‘deviant’ and ‘lacking’ and as superficially exciting and ‘special’. In eschewing both these constructions, I contended that itinerancy is ‘both/and’: both a valid and valuable lifestyle and subject to marginalisation that still admits of resistance and possible transformation. To support the study’s location in this ‘middle ground’, I need to deploy conceptual resources that in combination enable me to examine and understand three crucial **facets** of itinerant people’s lives:

- their marginalised status
- their capacity for resistance of that marginalisation

- their potential for transformation of that marginalisation and that resistance.

To elaborate this point, what binds the disparate elements of the conceptual framework together is the proposition that itinerancy involves distinctive relationships between people and space. It is this distinctive set of connections that explains the show people's sense of marginalisation, on account of their appearing to have no 'place' of their own. It explains also their efforts to resist and transform that marginalisation, by working to change the 'spaces' of itinerancy into 'places' that they *can* call 'home'.

Specifically, the argument underpinning this chapter – and this thesis – proceeds **as** follows

- The Queensland show people's itinerancy creates opportunities for them to turn the multiple spaces that they enter and leave into the 'spaces' that de Certeau (1984, 1986) envisaged **as** the sites of consumption, and thereby potentially of subversion, of their marginalised status.
- The show people's itinerancy provides opportunities for them to engage the outsideness and extend the creative understanding (Bakhtin, 1986a) of 'outsiders' to the show circuits, thereby maximising the prospect that 'the rules of the game' that marginalise itinerancy can be subverted and transformed.

It is these bonds among the elements of this conceptual framework that justify the selection and application in a single site of these particular and separate conceptual resources, and that support and strengthen the thesis's goal of

presenting a counternarrative about the show people and their education that is theoretically grounded and significant in itself.

## **3.2 De Certeau's concept of 'tactics of consumption'**

Michel de Certeau's contribution to the conceptual framework framing this thesis is his concept of 'tactics of consumption'. This section of the chapter consists of three subsections:

- *The practice of everyday life (1984)*
- *Heterologies: Discourse on the other (1986)*
- applications and critiques of de Certeau's work.

The section is by no means intended as a comprehensive analysis of de Certeau's ideas, but rather as a selective focus on the 'tactics of consumption' and associated ideas that constitute the first major element of the study's conceptual framework.

Throughout the following discussion, the emphasis will be on how my appropriation of de Certeau's concept of 'tactics of consumption' will enable me to explain and theorise the show people's experiences of marginalisation and their efforts to resist and sometimes to transform that marginalisation. This will help to justify my claim that the thesis constitutes a counternarrative to traditional 'stories' about itinerant people and how they should be

educated. At the same time, I shall point out that an important limitation of de Certeau's approach is the inability to change 'the rules of the game' of marginalisation and subversion, which justifies my drawing also on Bakhtin's notions of 'outsidedness' and 'creative understanding'.

### **3.2.1    *The practice of everyday life* (1984)**

De Certeau's research included forays into history, literary studies, cultural studies and psychoanalysis. Some of these varied disciplines were represented in de Certeau's book *The practice of everyday life* (1984), which was first published in 1974 and which was the key text for his elaboration of the concept of 'tactics of consumption'. Many elements of the argument of this book were packed densely into de Certeau's dedication, which is accordingly worth citing in full.

*To the ordinary man* [sic passim].

*To a common hero, an ubiquitous character, walking in countless thousands on the streets. In invoking here at the outset of my narratives the absent figure who provides both their beginning and their necessity, I inquire into the desire whose impossible object he represents. What are we asking this oracle whose voice is almost indistinguishable from the rumble of history to license us, to authorise us to say, when we dedicate to him the writing that one formerly offered in praise of the gods or the inspiring muses?*

*This anonymous hero **is** very ancient. He is the murmuring voice of societies. In all ages, he comes before texts. He does not expect representations. He squats now at the centre of **our** scientific stages. The floodlights have moved away from the actors who possess proper names and social blazons, turning first towards the **chorus** of secondary characters, then settling on the mass of the audience. The increasingly sociological and anthropological perspective of inquiry privileges the anonymous and the everyday in which zoom lenses cut out metonymic details – parts taken **for** the whole. Slowly the representations that formerly symbolised families, groups and orders disappear from the stage they dominated during the epoch of the name. We witness the advent of the number. It comes along with democracy, the large city, administration, cybernetics. It is a flexible and continuous mass, woven tight **like** a fabric with neither rips **nor** darned patches, a multitude of quantified heroes who lose names and faces **as** they become the ciphered river of the streets, a mobile language of computations and rationalities that belong **to no one**. (p. v)*

Despite the excess of masculine pronouns, this passage *can* be read **as** reflecting de Certeau's desire to focus academic attention on 'ordinary people' – the bit players, not the star actors, or those who are continually and routinely positioned at the **margins** rather than in the text itself. In the process, it was the actions and interactions of active social players that concerned him, rather than the operation of artificial forces or deterministic influences. Immediately we have a clear sense of de Certeau's celebration of human

agency on the part of all social participants, regardless of their degree of formal or overt power.<sup>1</sup>

Another of de Certeau's contentions, that researchers should concern themselves with the micro more than with the macro level of events, was elaborated in his preface to the English translation of *The practice of everyday life* (1984).

*For what I really wish to work out is a science of singularity; that is to say, a science of the relationship that links everyday pursuits to particular circumstances. And only in the local network of labour and recreation can we grasp how, within a grid of socio-economic constraints, these pursuits unfailingly establish relational tactics (a struggle for life), artistic creations (an aesthetic) and autonomous*

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<sup>1</sup> Ahearne (1995) expressed "reservation" about **this** dedication to the 'ordinary man' because "it is easy to forget that he does not exist" (p. 187). In a typically 'double edged' comment that contained **both** praise and criticism, Ahearne asserted that de Certeau's

*... invocation of this fantasmatic, impossible figure (his other), needs to be read with half an eye on other rhetorical invocations of the term (by the Moral Majority, by the tabloid press, by every kind of politician). Only then could Certeau's arresting re-employment of the term be read less as ballast to his writing than as a powerful perspectival displacement upon the operations of learned analysis. (p. 187)*

I discuss below my response to **this** kind of critique of de Certeau, arguing that the degree of human agency implicit in de Certeau's analysis is preferable to the less agential analyses against which he reacted, but that his view of **social** life does not readily account for changing 'the rules of the game' confronting such groups **as** the Queensland show people.



*initiatives (an ethic). The characteristically subtle logic of these “ordinary” activities comes **to** light only in the details. **And** hence it seems to ~~me~~ that this analysis, **as** its bond to another culture **is** rendered more explicit, will only be assisted in leading readers to uncover **for** themselves, in their own situation, their own tactics, their own creations and their own initiatives. (p. ix)*

Here de Certeau linked the idea of human agency that animated his dedication to a single name – “*tactics*” – that encapsulated and operationalised agency, particularly on the part of the less powerful and strong. That is, although all of us possess and deploy our “*owntactics*”, it is in situations where we are subordinate or vulnerable that we need to call on those specific resources.

Much of the “*General introduction*” **to** the book (pp. xi-xxiv) set out in programmatic form the theoretical framework guiding de Certeau’s empirical studies. He began by eschewing individuality (the elementary unit of the individual to which social groups can always be reduced). He ~~was~~ more interested in the “*modes of operation or schemata of action*” than in “*their authors or vehicles*” (p. xi). He continued:

*The purpose of this **work** is to make explicit the systems of operational combination (les combinatoires d’opérations) which also compose a “culture”, and to bring to light the models of action characteristic of users whose status as the dominated element in society (a status that does not mean that they are either passive **or** docile) is concealed by the euphemistic term ‘consumers’. Everyday life invents itself by poaching in*

*countless ways on the property of others.* (pp. xi-xii; emphasis in original)

In this passage, de Certeau introduced the terms “users” and “consumers” in the context of “culture”, and his proposition that these groups, despite their status “as the dominated element in society”, are in fact neither “passive” nor “docile”. Instead, they take part in “poaching in countless ways on the property of others”. In certain respects the show people engage in “poaching” on the spaces that they enter as a consequence of their itinerancy, as a prelude to their transformation of those spaces from marginalising to enabling territories for them.

### **“Consumer production”**

Having introduced the argument that human agency is manifested through tactics, particularly by less powerful individuals and groups, and that those tactics are deployed by consumers, who in doing so resist the application of labels such as ‘helpless’ and ‘passive’, de Certeau divided his theoretical framework into two categories: “Consumer production” (p. xii) and “The tactics of practice” (p. xvii). With regard to the first category, he elaborated three “positive determinations” informing his research into “consumer production”. The first was “usage, or consumption” (p. xii): in addition to the representations of a society and its modes of behaviour, he believed that attention should be directed at “the use to which they are put by groups or individuals” (p. xii). He drew on a favourite example to elaborate this notion:

*For instance, the ambiguity that subverted from within the Spanish colonisers' 'success' in imposing their own culture on the indigenous Indians is well known. Submissive, and even consenting to their subjection, the Indians nevertheless often made of the rituals, representations and laws imposed on them something quite different from what their conquerors had in mind; they subverted them not by rejecting or altering them, but by using them with respect to ends and references foreign to the system they had no choice but to accept. They were other within the very colonisation that outwardly assimilated them; their use of the dominant social order deflected its power, which they lacked the means to challenge; they escaped it without leaving it. The strength of their difference lay in procedures of 'consumption'. (p. xiii; emphasis in original)<sup>2</sup>*

De Certeau's use of the term "other" in this passage differed crucially from its usual employment to denote a marginalised and generally powerless deviation from 'the norm'. Here "other" contains and nurtures agency, whereby the South American "Indians" were enabled to make use of the Spanish invaders' "rituals, representations and laws" in ways that gave

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In view of the 'personal note' with which I concluded Chapter One, it is appropriate to point out that elements of de Certeau's argument underpinned an earlier thesis in Australian history (Danaher, 1991), without my being aware of this at the time, in my analysis of how the Darnley Islanders in the Torres Strait 'made use of' and 'consumed' the meanings and values of Christianity, 'civilisation' and colonisation brought to the Strait by the London Missionary Society in 1871.

them meaning and purpose in their own terms, rather than in the conquerors' terms. "'Consumption'" is central to this process by virtue of its association with both subversion of domination and marginalisation and the recognition and enactment of difference. From this perspective, it is clear why de Certeau insisted that consumption is an active, not a passive, performance. For the same reason, I conceive of the show people's consumption of their educational experiences and opportunities **as** avowedly active and **as** being directed at resisting their marginalised status.

De Certeau's second determining concept of "*consumerproduction*" (p. xii) was "*the procedures of everyday creativity*". Here he showed both where he drew on and where he departed from Foucault's book *Discipline and punish* (1979). On the one hand, he concurred that

*...the goal is to perceive and analyse the microbe-like operations proliferating within technocratic structures and deflecting their functioning by means of a multitude of 'tactics' articulated in the details of everyday life. ...* (p. xiv)

On the other hand:

*...the goal is not to make clearer how the violence of order is transmuted into a disciplinary technology, but rather to bring to light the clandestine forms taken by the dispersed, tactical and makeshift creativity of groups or individuals already caught in the nets of 'discipline'. (pp. xiv-xv)*

Two important attributes of ‘tactics’ are revealed in these two passages. Firstly, ‘tactics’ are pervasive and multifarious, “*a multitude*” that is “*articulated in the details of everyday life*”. Secondly, ‘tactics’ are both “*clandestine*” and immersed in the “*creativity of groups of individuals*”. In other words, a central reason for the success of ‘tactics’ in subverting marginalised status is that they are chameleon-like, evading attention because of the sheer number of their manifestations and working surreptitiously, ‘behind the scenes’, away from the spotlight of official notice.

De Certeau called the third organising principle of “*consumer production*” (p. xii) “*the formal structure of practice*” (p. xv). He contended that, even though they occur in particular contexts and lacked their own “*ideologies or institutions*” (p. xv), ways of usage and procedures of everyday creativity “*conform to certain rules*” based on a particular logic. To discern this logic, he suggested a combination of two techniques: conducting a number of descriptive and empirical investigations; and reading the scientific literature (particularly as it relates to rituals and networks, ordinary language, and formal logics and analytical philosophy). This thesis is conceived as both drawing on a detailed “*descriptive and empirical*” study and contributing to “*the scientific literature*”, in order to delineate “*the formal structure of practice*” in one setting of Traveller education for occupational Travellers.

His elaboration of these three determinants led de Certeau to posit a number of ironical statements about “*the marginality of a majority*”.

*Marginality is today no longer limited to minority groups, but is rather massive and pervasive; this cultural activity of the non-producers of culture, an activity that is unsigned, unreadable and unsymbolised,*

*remains the only one possible for all those who nevertheless buy and pay for the showy products through which a productivist economy articulates itself. Marginality is becoming universal. A marginal group has now become a silent majority.* (p. xvii)

For de Certeau, “a marginal group” was by no means homogeneous. “Social situations and power relationships” (p. xvii) come into play to make its members’ readings of and responses to ideas and images different and complex. Hence:

*...the necessity of differentiating both the ‘actions’ or ‘engagements’ (in the military sense) that the system of products effects within the consumer grid, and the various kinds of room to manoeuvre left for consumers by the situations in which they exercise their ‘art’.* (p. xvii)

The relevance of this passage to the argument being advanced in this thesis is twofold. Firstly, the passage reinforces de Certeau’s depiction of ‘tactics’ as taking many and varied forms, in response to “the system of products” operating “within the consumer grid”. Secondly, the implied reference to ‘tactics’ as taking up the “room to manoeuvre left for consumers” evokes the proposition that ‘tactics’ are the means by which variously marginalised individuals and groups are enabled to ‘consume’ and ‘make use of’ the spaces in which they are located and/or from which they are denied access. This is signified by de Certeau’s statement that “our research has concentrated above all on the uses of space, on the ways of frequenting or dwelling in a place. . .” (p. xxii).

The culmination of de Certeau's account of "*consumerproduction*" (p. xii) was its overt politicisation. Given the conflicts, tensions and balances inherent in culture, de Certeau asserted baldly: "*The tactics of consumption, the ingenious ways in which the weak **make** use of the strong, thus lend a political dimension to everyday practices*" (p. xvii). This observation was the logical extension of an explanation of social life that highlighted both ways in which power is exercised and – more importantly from the perspective of this thesis – ways in which agency is deployed to resist, subvert and have the potential to transform that power into something more collectively palatable.

To this point, I have examined de Certeau's discussion of "*consumer production*". Rather than being an oxymoron, this term has emerged as depicting and explaining the exercise of human agency by the less powerful through their deployment of 'tactics' of subversion and particularly of consumption, thereby asserting the validity and value of their difference from 'the mainstream' while minimising the deleterious effects of their divergence from 'the norm'. These 'tactics of consumption' are clandestine and creative, and they demonstrate that labels such as 'marginalised group' and 'minority group' are floating signifiers rather than fixed essences. These 'tactics of consumption' therefore reflect a view of social life that **is** at once politicised and agential. They are also indispensable to my efforts to conceptualise the marginalisation and the resistance that I argued above are equally central elements of the show people's itinerant lifestyle.

***“The tactics of practice”***

In addition to “*consumerproduction*” (p. xii), de Certeau’s other major category in his conceptual framework was what he termed “*the tactics of practice*” (p. xvii). Significantly, he envisaged the main constituents of “*the tactics of practice*” as representing something of a ‘corrective’ to what he considered “*the rather too neatly dichotomized. . . relations between consumers and the mechanisms of production*” (p. xvii), so that “*the overly schematic character of the general statement can be somewhat nuanced*” (p. xviii). I shall return to this point in a later subsection; here it is sufficient to note that de Certeau himself prefigured some of the criticisms of his conceptual framework as tending to excessive polarisation between more powerful producers and less powerful consumers, and that he sought to counter that tendency in his theorising about “*the tactics of practice*”.

In the process of elaborating the elements of “*a problematics that could articulate the **material** collected*” in his research (p. xvii) – “*a problematics*” that resonates with the ‘unproblematic othering’ and ‘celebration’ identified at the end of the previous chapter – de Certeau identified three key concepts: trajectories, tactics (incorporating strategies, place and space) and rhetorics. Firstly, the “*trajectories*” of consumers, who “*move about*” in “*technocratically constructed, written, and functionalized space*”, “*form unforeseeable sentences, partly unreadable paths across a space*”, and they “*trace out the ruses of other interests and desires that are neither determined nor captured by the systems in which they develop*” (p. xviii).



So trajectories are an analytical tool that assist researchers to identify and examine the effects of individuals' and groups' 'tactics of consumption'. De Certeau's view of trajectories as performing this function was consistent with his argument that tactics are not easily detected, surveyed or measured. For example, he rejected "*statistical investigation*" (such as that which characterised some of the literature critiqued in Chapter Two) as being too detached and generalised to be able to portray consumers' trajectories with sufficient flexibility to record "*the bricolage (the artisan-like inventiveness) and the discursiveness*" (p. xviii) that make up social life. Similarly, de Certeau asserted the importance of avoiding the tendency of trajectories to reduce "acts" to "a tracing", on account of a trajectory's '*plane projection, a flattening out*' (pp. xviii-xix). From this perspective, while I certainly aspire to present "*a tracing*" of the show people's 'tactics of consumption', I equally want to avoid "*a flattening out*" in my account of their itinerant lifestyle, seeking on the contrary to emphasise continually the dynamism, multiplicity and variability of that lifestyle.

For his second conceptual element of "*the tactics of practice*", de Certeau elaborated his construction of 'tactics' by proposing a distinction between them and 'strategies' based on the kind of activity involved, who carries it out and for what purposes.

*I call a 'strategy' the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an 'environment'. A strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as proper. . . and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct*

*from it (competitors, adversaries, 'clienteles', 'targets' or 'objects' of research). Political, economic and scientific rationality has been constructed on this strategic model.*

*I call a 'tactic', on the other hand, a calculus which cannot count on a 'proper' (a spatial or institutional localisation), nor thus on a borderline distinguishing the other as a visible totality. The place of a tactic belongs to the other. A tactic insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance. It has at its disposal no base where it can capitalise on its advantages, prepare its expansions and secure independence with respect to circumstances. The 'proper' is a victory of space over time. On the contrary, because it does not have a place, a tactic depends on time – it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized 'on the wing'. Whatever it wins, it does not keep. It must constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into 'opportunities'. The weak must continually turn to their own ends forces alien to them. . .*

*. . . But these tactics. . . also show the extent to which intelligence is inseparable from the everyday struggles and pleasures that it articulates. Strategies, in contrast, conceal beneath objective calculations their connection with the power that sustains them from within the stronghold of its own 'proper' place or institution. (pp. xix-xx)*

This lengthy pair of definitions **skirts** close to the same tendency to polarisation for which de Certeau theorised "*the tactics of practice*" – although, as I shall discuss later in this subsection, his distinction between 'tactics' and 'strategies' is more dynamic and less rigid than some of his

critics have conceded. For the moment, it is useful to compare the attributes that he assigns to these two terms. Strategies are associated with *“a subject of will and power”*; they are enacted in *“a place that can be circumscribed as proper”* (that is, as officially sanctioned and valued); they are persistent and enduring; they emanate from *“the power that sustains them from within the stronghold of its own ‘proper’ place or institution”*. By contrast, tactics are associated with *“the weak”*; they have themselves *“no base”*, so they must insinuate themselves *“into the other’s place”*; they are fleeting and temporary; they reveal the *“intelligence”* that *“is inseparable from the everyday struggles and pleasures that it articulates”*.

This set of comparisons applies and clarifies de Certeau’s earlier account of *“consumer production”*. Thus there is evidence of agency being operationalised by *“the weak”* through their clandestine and creative tactics as ‘users’ or ‘consumers’ of the ‘place’ of the ‘proper’, thereby subverting their marginalised positioning by subjects *“of will and power”*. The clarification derives from de Certeau’s employment of striking images to depict the respective actions and aspirations of those using ‘tactics’ and those using ‘strategies’. From the perspective of this thesis, the introduction of ‘strategies’ into de Certeau’s theoretical framework provides the basis for my response to the first research question in Chapter Five: that is, it equips me to analyse and explain the show people’s experiences of marginalisation arising from the fact of their itinerancy, in a very different way from the ‘deficit model’ that lies at the heart of the ‘unproblematic othering’ of itinerant people cited at the end of the previous chapter.

As well as providing a conceptual basis for addressing the first research question, de Certeau's focus on 'strategies' does three other things: it reminds us that the more powerful also have agency (exercised through 'strategies'); it emphasises the integral dynamism of that framework, with the seemingly eternal interactions between 'tactics' and 'strategies' (thereby strengthening de Certeau's position against charges of excessive polarisation, as I discuss in a later subsection); and it introduces another crucial distinction devised by de Certeau – that between 'place' and 'space'.

*A field (lieu) is the order (of whatever kind) in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence. It thus excludes the possibility of two things being in the same location (place). The law of the 'proper' rules in the place: the elements taken into consideration are beside **one** another, each situated in its own 'proper' and distinct location, a location it defines. A place is thus an instantaneous configuration of positions. It implies an indication of stability.*

*A **space** exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities and time variables. Thus space is composed of intersections of mobile elements. It is in a sense actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it. Space occurs as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalise it and make it function in a polyvalent unity of conflictual programs **or** contractual proximities. On this view, in relation to place, space is like the word when it is spoken, that is, when it is caught in the ambiguity of an actualisation, transformed into a term dependent upon many different conventions, situated **as** the act of a present (**or** of a time), and modified*

*by the transformations caused by successive contexts. In contradistinction to the place, it has thus none of the univocity or stability of a 'proper'. (p. 117)*

Earlier de Certeau asserted that a tactic has “*at its disposal no base*” and that it therefore “*insinuates itself into the other's place*” (p. xix). Here his conceptualisation of ‘space’ was **as** a physical manifestation of that process of ‘insinuation’. That is, the ‘space’ is the outcome of the process whereby a ‘place’ has been entered and occupied – however incompletely and temporarily – by a tactic.

De Certeau elaborated this argument **by** emphasising the contrasts between ‘place’ and ‘space’. On the one hand, ‘place’ is where “*the law of the 'proper' rules*”; it is “*an instantaneous configuration of positions*” because of the tendency to clarity and order of “*the law of the 'proper'*”; accordingly it “*implies an indication of stability*”. On the other hand, ‘space’ is “*composed of intersections of mobile elements*”, rather than being the site of operation of a single “*law*”; it is “*in a sense actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it*”; and it “*has thus none of the univocity or stability of a 'proper' [place]*”. Laws, in other words, seldom if ever exist in their perfect state.

De Certeau crystallised the distinction between ‘place’ and ‘space’ by asserting: “*In short, space is a practised place*” (p. 117). By this he meant that, just **as** “*in relation to place, space is like the word when it is spoken*”, “*the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers*” and “*an act of reading is the space produced by the practice of a particular place*”. All these examples have in common the

proposition that officially designated, sanctioned and valued ‘places’ are entered, changed and transformed into ‘spaces’ through tactical consumption of those ‘places’.

The significance of de Certeau’s proposition about ‘place’ and ‘space’ for this thesis’s conceptual framework is profound. Firstly, in contradiction to the prevailing assumption in the distance education literature that distance education students and their teachers are located in separate and fixed spaces, taken literally de Certeau’s understanding of ‘space’ is much closer to the situation experienced by itinerant people who travel through different spaces. Thus his references to the *“intersections of mobile elements”* that constitute space and *“the ensemble of movements deployed within it”* are almost ‘literal metaphors’ for the daily lifestyle of itinerants such as the Queensland show people. Given that de Certeau’s work operated at the level of poetics and metaphors, it is important to explicate this kind of ‘literal metaphor’ or semantic connection with this study.

Secondly, de Certeau argued that ‘space’ is both *“polyvalent”* and unstable. This is because space is, like a spoken word, ambiguous, *“situated”* in present acts and *“modified...by successive contexts”*. This means that the interactions between show people and other people that occur when they cross multiple spaces are complex, influenced by multiple contexts and redolent of multiple meanings and values. So space is the site of intersection among competing discourses about such matters as what a ‘home’ is, the benefits and drawbacks of an itinerant lifestyle and the educational rights and responsibilities of itinerant people – all of which are themes that I explore at length in the data analysis chapters of this thesis.

Thirdly, ‘space’ is “*practised*”. This point recalls that de Certeau’s elaboration of the distinction between ‘tactics’ and ‘strategies’, which prompted a discussion of his contrast between ‘place’ and ‘space’, was a key element of his articulation of “*the tactics of practice*”. This point is also a timely reminder that the spaces crossed by itinerants are not elements in a hypothetical discussion or an academic thesis – they are sites of meaning making for real, live, thinking and feeling human beings whose lifestyle deviates from ‘the norm’ of settled residence. This gives purpose and relevance to this study of how one group of itinerants ‘uses’ and ‘consumes’ the ‘places’ that they encounter and thereby transforms them into ‘spaces’ that have significance for them.

So de Certeau’s contribution to my developing conceptualisation of ‘space’ lies in his insistence that space is mobile, polyvalent, practised and unstable, and the site of the deployment of ‘tactics of consumption’. De Certeau’s insights support a reading whereby people such as itinerants, through deploying ‘tactics of consumption’, enter and transform the ‘place’ of the ‘proper’ into a ‘space’ that reverts to being the ‘place’ of the ‘proper’ once the tactics are no longer deployed. This conceptualisation is both complex and dynamic – and in the process in keeping with the multiple elements of life on the Queensland show circuits, including marginalisation, resistance and some aspects of transformation.

A brief digression at this point into the contemporary academic and popular obsession of globalisation serves to illustrate my understanding of de Certeau’s distinction between ‘place’ and ‘space’. Terry Evans (1997)

captured both sets of experiences underlying these elements of social life when he noted:

*...both history and the present show that people view such interchanges [associated with globalisation] across their borders as far from benign, and rather as intrusions, invasions and incursions into their spaces, places and cultures. As I write and you read – events distant in space and time – people will be resisting, protesting and fighting against previous or prospective incursions into their territories and cultures. In this sense, some of the elements which comprise what we call ‘globalisation’ are the sources of battle, and not of ‘development’, or especially pleasure. (p. 7)*

De Certeau’s concepts help me to analyse the “sources” and the effects “of battle” engaged in by the show people as they seek to transform “their spaces” into ‘places’ of their own.

De Certeau envisaged as the third conceptual element of “the tactics of practice” “the discipline of rhetoric”, or “the science of the ‘ways of speaking’” (p. xx).

*The discipline of rhetoric offers models for differentiating among the types of tactics[;].. rhetoric. ..offers an array of figure-types for the analysis of everyday ways of acting even though such analysis is in theory excluded from scientific discourse. Two logics of action (the one tactical, the other strategic) arise from these two facets of practising language. In the space of a language (as in that of games), a society*



*makes more explicit the formal rules of action and the operations that differentiate them.* (p. xx)

De Certeau's analysis of 'rhetoric' as one of "*the tactics of practice*" reinforced his argument that an artifact of social life – in this case, a word or statement – is not inherently either 'tactical' or 'strategic' and is in fact an 'empty signifier'. Its deployment by 'real' people with varied intentions and motivations is what brings it into 'practice', and thereby gives it tactical or strategic effect. This point derives from de Certeau's account of the same territory being transformed from a 'place' to a 'space' through the operation of 'tactics'. (It *can* be argued that a similar point *can* be made about education, that it too is an artifact and is therefore simultaneously the site of marginalisation and potential transformation.) This is a timely reminder of the need to avoid essentialising 'tactics of consumption' as a unidimensional and stable phenomenon. To do so would be to misrepresent de Certeau's understanding of 'tactics of consumption' as complex, fleeting and unstable. This point has also a strong resonance with the argument advanced in the previous chapter: that itinerancy needs to be understood as 'both/and' enabling and challenging, a resonance that highlights the conceptual compatibility between that argument and my selection of 'tactics of consumption' as a major theoretical resource in this study.

The bulk of *The practice of everyday life* was devoted to applying de Certeau's conceptual framework, outlined in this and the previous subsection, to various phenomena of everyday life. Examples included "*ordinary language*" (p. 1), "*popular cultures*" (p. 15), story telling, pedestrians in city

streets, train travel, writing, reading, persuading others of the correctness of one's viewpoint and conventions in dealing with dying people.

De Certeau's elaboration of "*consumerproduction*" and "*the tactics of practice*" in the "*General introduction*" to *The practice of everyday life* constitutes the major source for the theorising about 'tactics of consumption' on which this thesis draws. From this elaboration, 'tactics of consumption' emerge **as** reflecting human agency, subverting domination and asserting difference, demonstrating the fluidity of terms like 'marginalised group' and 'minority group', occurring in 'trajectories', interacting with strategies, transforming 'places' into 'spaces' and being exemplified in the shifting practices of 'rhetoric'. In combination, these conceptual resources suggest that the spaces through which itinerants travel are politicised, temporary and unstable, and the sites of interaction between tactics and strategies and of the transformation of marginalising places into subverting and enabling spaces. This combined conceptual weight is both consistent with, and central to, the 'both/and' approach to understanding itinerancy being advocated in this thesis.

### 3.2.2    *Heterologies: Discourse on the other* (1986)

Many of the ideas in *The practice of everyday life* were taken up in another of de Certeau's influential books, *Heterologies: Discourse on the other* (1986). There he applied notions such **as** tactics, strategies and rhetorics to particular historical and literary cases. Examples included the development of psycho-analysis (in which the repressed past returned surreptitiously to the present);

Freudian ideas applied to literary analysis; selected texts by Montaigne; mysticism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; works by Jules Verne and Alexandre Dumas; a critique of Foucault's books *The order of things* and *Discipline and punish*; and links among history, science and fiction.

The use to which I wish to put *Heterologies* in this thesis is as a single example of a demonstration of the conceptual resources outlined in *The practice of everyday life*. This example is taken from the final chapter of *Heterologies*, entitled "*The politics of silence: The long march of the Indians*". This chapter depicted the continuing resistance to European colonialism by the "*Indians*" of South and Central America, in countries such as Brazil, Mexico and Panama.

De Certeau began the chapter by pondering the intentions that were likely to motivate the Indians, and consequently the activities in which they were likely to engage in order to achieve those intentions.

*The actions the Indians take are directed less toward the construction of a common ideology than toward the "organization" (a word-leitmotif) of tactics and operations. In this context, the political relevance of the geo-graphical distinctions between separate places is echoed. . . in the distribution of places of power. . . (p. 227; emphasis in original)*

Here de Certeau argued that the Indians' rejection of a common "*ideology*" among their disparate groups – Tan (19%) referred to "*about 200 Indian ethnic groups*" making up the subject of de Certeau's discussion (p. 32) – reflected their desire to avoid adopting practices that were similar to those of the conquerors and that were therefore likely to increase, rather than

subvert, their marginalisation. That is, their selection of specific “*tactics and operations*” was to be based on local contexts and situational analyses, thereby exploiting the transience and flexibility of tactics. Furthermore, the Indians recognised the crucial importance of emphasising, rather than eliding, geographical and political distinctions among “*separate places*”. This reinforced the point that tactics are directed at specific ‘places’ as a prelude to changing those ‘places’ into ‘spaces’.

The relevance of this passage to this thesis lies in ongoing ‘official’ efforts to homogenise the Queensland show people by conceiving of them as a single group with certain predictable features and behaviours (in this context, the difficulties of using the label ‘show people’ in this thesis are considered in Chapter Five). These efforts are opposed by the show people’s recognition and celebration of the difference and multiplicity of their identities and their lifestyle, which create opportunities for them to deploy ‘tactics of consumption’ of such phenomena as official discourses about them and the show children’s educational provision to enter official ‘places’ and make them into ‘spaces’. Thus the show people, like the South and Central American Indians, are more interested in exercising their agency through their own ‘tactics of consumption’ than they are in employing the marginalising strategies of ‘the mainstream’.

This point underscores the importance of less powerful groups identifying and being sustained by one or more sources of meaning and even of inspiration. De Certeau related how

... *if the survivors' resistance has found political expression, it is because. ...their communities continued to return periodically to the home village, to claim their rights to the land and to maintain, through this collective alliance on a common soil, an anchorage in the particularity of a place.* (p. 229)

Furthermore:

*The soil. ...enables the resistance to avoid being disseminated in the occupiers' power grid, to avoid being captured by the dominating, interpretive systems of discourse (or by the simple inversion of those discourses, a tactic which remains prisoner to their logic). It "maintains" a difference rooted in an affiliation that is opaque and inaccessible to both violent appropriation and learned coaptation. It is the unspoken foundation of affirmations that have political meaning to the extent that they are based on a realization of coming from a "different" place (different, not opposite) on the part of those whom the omnipresent conquerors dominate.* (p. 229; emphasis in original)

The show people's equivalent of the Indians' "soil" is their proud association with a distinctive contribution to Australian cultural life, centred on their itinerancy. Thus, if 'tactics of consumption' derive from "*the particularity of a place*", and if resistance to domination involves maintaining "*a difference rooted in an affiliation*" and "*a realization of coming from a 'different' place*", that "*place*" is the physical and symbolic spaces on the show circuits. This is a far more dynamic and fluid understanding of itinerancy than the 'either/or' approach that derives from conceiving of

itinerant people in terms of ‘unproblematic othering’ or ‘unproblematic celebration’.

De Certeau’s conviction that ‘tactics of consumption’ can be very enduring, and that they *can* also contribute to productive social change, was expressed in the following passage:

*It is as though the opportunity for a sociopolitical renewal of Western societies were emerging along its fringes, precisely where it has been the most oppressive. Out of what Western societies have held in contempt, combated and believed they had subjugated, there are arising political alternatives and social models which represent, perhaps, the only hope for reversing the massive acceleration and reproduction of totalitarian, homogenising effects generated by the power structures and technology of the West. (p. 231)*

Here the less powerful, through exercising agency and deploying tactics to subvert the marginalising strategies, have survived and endured. Moreover, they have developed viable alternatives to “*the massive acceleration and reproduction of totalitarian, homogenizing effects generated by the power structures and technology of the West*”. That is, the people on ‘the margins’ have been recognised **as** having and experiencing something that is superior to ‘the mainstream’. Again this demonstrates the conceptual superiority of the ‘both/and’ to the ‘either/or’ approaches to understanding itinerancy and how it is enacted in particular sites and contexts.

This capacity of ‘tactics of consumption’, not merely to endure marginalising strategies, but also to constitute productive alternative forms of social life, relates particularly to the show children’s educational provision. Chapter Seven considers in greater detail how that provision encapsulates the possibility of a different, and potentially more enabling, approach to the provision of Traveller education. Here I wish to emphasise de Certeau’s insistence that ‘tactics of consumption’ are not wholly negative or combative, but instead contain the seeds of social transformation.

De Certeau concluded his chapter on “*The politics of silence: The long march of the Indians*” by discussing – appropriately for this thesis – the educational dimension of the Indians’ interactions with the conquerors. De Certeau argued that “*the ‘country schools’ established thus far*” for the Indians were “*‘a catastrophe’*”, because they had rendered the practices of everyday life “*hierarchical, devaluing or crushing difference, and thereby depriving democratic undertakings of cultural landmarks and technical means*” (p. 232). De Certeau proposed instead a form of “*cultural pluralism*” as being “*essential to the self-management perspective*” of Indians (p. 232), operationalised through such initiatives as teaching traditional medicine and herbalism in schools. The outcome of this “*cultural pluralism*” would be the establishment of “*a space of exchange and sharing*” between the Indians and the conquerors (p. 232).

This discussion reinforces two propositions outlined above. Firstly, de Certeau identified education as a site of deployment of ‘tactics of consumption’ and of the turning of ‘places’ into ‘spaces’. That is, schools function as officially designated centres for publicly approved learning, yet they are also

locations for inserting different kinds of knowledge from that that is officially sanctioned, **as** Chapter Seven will illustrate. Secondly, ‘tactics of consumption’ are not wholly destructive from the viewpoint of ‘the mainstream’, but can in fact create opportunities – otherwise not available – for official knowledge to learn from, and to be informed by, alternative understandings of the world.

So this discussion of *Heterologies* has examined de Certeau’s application to a single empirical study of the complex conceptual resources outlined in *The practice of everyday life*. The discussion has also somewhat extended those resources in three significant respects. Firstly, ‘tactics of consumption’ are used to resist the elision of difference among and within marginalised groups. Secondly, ‘tactics of consumption’ derive from a definite sense of association with a different place, outside the realm of ‘the proper’. Thirdly, ‘tactics of consumption’ can be used to sustain difference, and even to extend that difference into ‘the place’ of ‘the proper’, where it *can* both subvert the marginalising strategies of the more powerful and enrich their own, **as well as** the marginalised groups’, social practices.

De Certeau’s application of these three points to educational contexts recalls this thesis’s focus on the show children’s educational provision **as** the site of the operation of ‘tactics of consumption’ and ‘strategies of marginalisation’, the location of the celebration and the elision of difference, the territory of the ‘spaces’ of itinerancy and ‘the place’ of ‘the proper’. All of this serves to justify the selection of ‘tactics of consumption’ and associated ideas in helping to explain the ‘both/and’ approach to understanding itinerancy **as** simultaneously an arena of limitations imposed from outside and



of the possibility of throwing off those restraints. Those concepts assist in moving beyond the ossified and mutually opposed categories of ‘unproblematic othering’ and ‘unproblematic celebration’ towards a far more fluid and shifting account of itinerancy. In the process, those concepts are fundamental in contributing to presenting a counternarrative to constructions of Traveller education **as** either ‘deviant’ or ‘special’.

### 3.2.3 Applications and critiques of de Certeau’s work

Thus far in this section I have outlined some key de Certolian ideas. I have argued for the particular utility of those ideas in prosecuting my preferred ‘both/and’ approach to understanding the multifaceted and shifting nature of itinerancy, thereby avoiding falling into the ‘either/or’ conceptual ‘trap’ of constructing itinerancy **as** inherently disadvantaged or superficially exotic. Now I turn to present **a** necessarily brief overview of, and engagement with, selected applications and critiques of relevant de Certolian concepts. In doing so, I have two **goals** in mind:

- to justify my distinctive deployment of ‘tactics of consumption’ and associated ideas, through
  - showing how those same ideas have been used by other commentators
  - demonstrating how some criticisms of those ideas have been misconceived from the perspective of the argument presented in this chapter

- to agree with certain other criticisms of de Certeau's concepts and to use that agreement as a 'lead in' to my appropriation of two of Bakhtin's notions.

The emphasis throughout this discussion is on explaining what for me are the crucial triple dimensions of itinerancy: marginalisation, resistance and transformation. Relatedly, I seek to develop the best possible conceptual framework for presenting a counternarrative to traditional understandings of itinerancy and Traveller education. The following disagreement with some criticisms of de Certeau, and agreement with other criticisms, are intended to contribute to and endorse that explanation and that counternarrative.

Within that context, a considerable paradox surrounds the large number of applications and critiques that have been made of de Certeau's work. This paradox is that the 'limitation' for which he has been most consistently criticised – his alleged dependence on reductive binary oppositions – is also the source of the most fruitful interpretations and transpositions to other sites of his ideas. This is because the terms and concepts that appear to be rigid binaries nevertheless generate a great deal of fruitful debate. Thus, while some commentators have agonised over the degrees of conceptual clarity of, and the legitimacy of the distinctions between, such paired categories as 'strategies' – 'tactics' and 'place' – 'space', other writers have happily 'consumed' those same categories by making them the basis of diverse and generally credible analyses of historical and contemporary social life.

This paradox is directly significant for this thesis in three ways. Firstly, given the degree of enduring controversy that de Certeau's conceptual resources have attracted, I feel justified in adopting an approach to those

resources that emphasises their evident relevance and applicability to this thesis but that also concludes by accusing de Certeau of not facilitating a conceptualisation of changing ‘the rules of the game’.

Secondly, my own ‘consumption’ of de Certeau’s work is unashamedly pragmatic: the ‘validity’ of his concepts – and others’ accounts of those concepts – will be asserted to the extent that they appear to advance or retard the research project with which this thesis is concerned. In other words, my method for responding to the divergence between de Certeau’s thought and critiques of that thought is to seek to apply one or the other alternative explanation to the actions of the Queensland show people in relation to the educational provision established for their children. This is one important way in which this thesis can and does contribute to theoretical knowledge, by applying and endorsing, and/or contesting and moving beyond, the writings of de Certeau and his critics.

Thirdly, an abiding sense of ambivalence, which characterises relations between itinerants and non-itinerants and with which the Traveller education literature is replete, also courses through the applications and critiques of de Certeau’s ideas. This ambivalence is due partly to the sheer range of issues on which he commented, a result of which is that a ‘de Certeau position’ is sometimes sought on a matter on which he himself might have preferred not to comment. This ambivalence is also due partly to the fact that de Certeau’s writing style, while generally concise and lucid, sometimes contained nuances and subtleties that did not necessarily ‘survive’ the translation from his native French into English. Consequently, some critiques of de Certeau’s work derive from an uncertainty about whether to ‘read’ that work literally or

metaphorically, and if the latter about which alternative metaphorical ‘reading’ to pursue (hence the notion of ‘literal metaphors’ identified earlier in the chapter).

Briefly, the link between the argument to this point and this element of the conceptual framework is this. Both itinerants and de Certeau travel across spaces that conventionally remain separate and distinct from one another. For itinerants, this crossing of spaces both marginalises them from, and equips them to interact productively with, non-itinerant people. In the case of de Certeau, his thought traversed a very extensive range of interests and issues, and he deployed his own intellectual “*re-employments*” (Ahearne, 1995, pp. 29-33) of previous ideas and projects in his supplementary traverses. Thus it is not coincidental that some commentators (Chambers, 1993, p. 193; Jenluns, 1992, p. 223) have identified ‘the nomad’ as a figure for whom de Certeau’s work is particularly germane, and that his biographer (Ahearne, 1995) has referred to de Certeau as having an “*intellectual itinerary*” and as having engaged in “*untiring textual, cultural and interlocutory ‘travel’*” (p. 2). In the course of his “*intellectual itinerary*”, he both offended some commentators’ sensibilities and informed the supplementary thinking of others.

As I explain below, the most crucial area of ambivalence surrounding de Certeau’s thought is concentrated on the explanatory power, or alternatively the reductionist meaninglessness, of the various paired categories such as ‘strategies’ – ‘tactics’ and ‘place’ – ‘space’ that I introduced at the beginning of this section. The key issue in analysing that ambivalence is whether those

categories are **fixed** binary oppositions or fluid conceptual filters.<sup>3</sup> I argue that

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3 In this context, Docker's (1994, p. 163) rhetorical question and subsequent commentary are worth noting as an example of the flavour of the discussion in this subsection:

*Don't binary distinctions always strain to homogenise opposing terms, effacing difference and complexity? Terms like dominant and resistant are altogether too polarising, too bloc-like, too unitary and unifying, too unsupple as categories. Dominant discourses, if they exist in a contestatory world, are themselves not monolithic and single in character, but multifarious and contradictory. What happens in culture, 'high', radical or popular, is too ideologically 'mixed', too discursively messy, to be easily cast into the binary either/or boxes of domination and resistance.*

While I agree with Docker that the potential for those binaries to be essentialised or naturalised should be resisted and subverted, it is important to remember that binaries such as madwoman and white/non-white are extremely powerful influences on social behaviour. Stuart Hall's reference to "the fashionable postmodernist notion of nomadology – the breakdown of everything into everything" (in a question responding to James Clifford's paper [Clifford, 1992, p. 115]) encapsulated the perhaps equally dangerous potential of following the opposite line of thinking to its logical extreme.

Furthermore, Docker's critique here of "binary distinctions", with its implied disagreement with de Certeau's analysis of social life, was actually phrased in terms of his disapproval of Fiske's account of that analysis in his book *Understanding popular culture* (1989). The quotation at the beginning of this footnote was preceded by the following:

*A kind of rampant structuralism also pervades in the way oppositions are created. Throughout Understanding Popular Culture we learn that there is in the world a simple binary opposition between two central forces, the dominant ideology and popular culture, the power-bloc and the people, the system and the subordinate, top-down*

in most cases – certainly as they apply to this study of Queensland show people – the categories in question are fluid conceptual filters, but that underlying them is a deep seated binary opposition that for me is encapsulated in the phrase ‘the rules of the game’. The point to emphasise here is that the ‘binary opposition’ – ‘conceptualfilter’ question derives from the ambivalence caused by de Certeau’s movement across several intellectual spaces. This is perhaps the least immediately apparent, yet possibly the most significant, point of connection between his work and this thesis’s conceptual framework. This reinforces my view that ambivalence, whether in relation to itinerancy or with regard to de Certeau’s theoretical position, can be both marginalising and resistant, and that it can ultimately lead to transformation. It also demonstrates the value – once again – of a dynamic ‘both/and’, rather than a fixed ‘either/or’, construction of itinerancy.

This subsection consists of the following discussion points:

- ‘strategies’ and ‘tactics’
- ‘place’ and ‘space’
- marginalisation and resistance
- change and transformation.

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*power and ‘bottom-uppower’. Are things so limpidly clear?* (p. 163)

I have sought to ensure that **both** my understanding and my appropriation **of** de Certeau’s thought are not reducible to **such** crudely conceived binary oppositions.

The first two of these discussion points are the paired categories that have generated so much controversy among de Certeau scholars; the final two are more general issues of concern to both those scholars and myself. In all cases, the discussion points are explicated from the perspective of their contribution to the developing conceptual framework of this thesis. This is achieved by a relatively cursory acknowledgment of the approving applications of de Certeau's ideas and a more extensive engagement with critiques of those ideas. This approach rests on my desire to explain and justify my decision to apply selected de Certeauian concepts, based on 'tactics of consumption', and also to explain my use of the Bakhtinian notions of 'outsidedness' and 'creative understanding' to augment those concepts in the thesis.

### **'Strategies' and 'tactics'**

In the two preceding subsections, I outlined de Certeau's concept of 'tactics of consumption', explained it in relation to its categorical pair 'strategies' and provided a rationale for making it a crucial element of this thesis's conceptual framework. That rationale rested on the assertion that this concept is necessary to explain and justify my interpretation of the Queensland show people's 'consumption' of the educational provision designed for their children. In particular, that interpretation centres on the show people using their 'tactics of consumption' to subvert the marginalised spaces of itinerancy and transform them into more enabling and productive spaces.

From this perspective, it is appropriate to note that several **studies** have made explicit use of de Certeau's 'strategies' – 'tactics' paired category, thereby demonstrating the category's utility across a wide range of empirical sites and research agendas. Firstly, Garbutcheon Singh and Miller (1995) applied de Certeau's concept of 'tactics' to extend Homi Bhabha's notion of 'mimicry' in their analysis of the Asia Education Foundation's position statement, "*Studies of Asia: A statement for Australian schools*". Secondly, Blaber (1989) applied de Certeau's (1984) distinction between 'strategies' and 'tactics' to support his critique of 'the picaresque' as a literary genre. In particular, Blaber's likening of the picaresque to de Certeau's concept of 'tactics' prefigures some of my accounts in the data analysis chapters of the Queensland show people's actions:

*If the picaresque is the story of a figure that operates within enemy territory taking advantage of opportunities as they arise but not gaining any real power, and if the picaro poaches and makes use of guileful ruses, then the story of the picaresque is also about the art of the weak. It is a narrative emphasising the tactical. (p. 335)*

Below I take up the issue of whether tactics are always and inevitably "*the art of the weak*". For the moment, I want to emphasise the evident transferability of Blaber's analysis here to the Queensland show people, who might therefore be regarded as operating "*within enemy territory taking advantage of opportunities as they arise*", and malung "*use of guileful ruses*". The analogy is by no means exact, but it is nevertheless a vivid and evocative metaphor for the show people's own emphases "*on the tactical*".



Thirdly, with strong parallels to the empirical site explored in this thesis, Jenkins (1992) linked the image of ‘the nomad’ directly to de Certeau’s concept of ‘tactics of consumption’. Thus he referred to “*De Certeau’s emphasis upon the tactical nature of consumption and the nomadic character of the consumer’s culture*” (p. 223). Jenkins’ description of “*fan culture*” as being “*nomadic, ever-expanding, seeming all-encompassing yet, at the same time, permanent, capable of maintaining strong traditions and creating enduring works*” (p. 223) has some parallels with the show people’s situation, in the sense that the show people are both literally “*nomadic*” and “*capable of maintaining strong traditions and creating enduring works*” (although I dissent from Jenkins’ criticism of de Certeau that led him to construct North American television fans as being “*ever-expanding, seeming all-encompassing*” and “*permanent*”; certainly I do not assign these terms to the show people). This suggests that being a nomad enables one to cross over into others’ territories and to return ‘home’ at will, borrowing from those territories ‘materials’ (both physical and intellectual) that can be added to one’s store of ‘materials’ at ‘home’. This is similar to the argument that itinerants use ‘tactics of consumption’ to take from various ‘places’ what they desire and in the process to transform them into temporary ‘spaces’. It also highlights the dynamism of itinerancy and the folly of reducing itinerancy to the ‘either/or’ fixed binaries identified at the end of the previous chapter.

Fourthly, in another clear parallel with this thesis, Chambers (1993) used the image of ‘the nomad’ engaging in ‘tactics of consumption’ in his application of de Certeau’s ideas in *The practice of everyday life* (1984) to propose a postmodern geography that envisaged “*cities without maps*”

(1993, p. 188). Chambers argued in favour of studies that were “*attentive to the different histories, nuances and narratives that combine in making up our present*” (pp. 192-193). For Chambers, the part played by ‘nomads’ lay in responding to the effects of “*trajectories of interests and desires that are neither necessarily determined nor captured by the system in which they develop*” (p. 193).

*In this sense, as de Certeau goes on suggestively to underline, we all become nomads, migrating across a system that is too vast to be our own, but in which we are fully involved, translating and transforming bits and elements into local instances of sense. It is this remaking, this transmutation, that makes such texts and languages – the city, cinema, music, culture and the contemporary world – habitable: as though they were a space borrowed for a moment by a transient, an immigrant, a nomad.* (p. 193)

For me, the strength of Chambers’ analysis here is twofold. On the one hand, his statement that “*we all become nomads*” suggests points of identification with ‘literal nomads’ such as the Queensland show people, thereby reinforcing the recurring argument in this thesis that itinerancy is a floating signifier rather than a fixed essence, and that accordingly it generates considerable ambivalence among both people **who** are ‘literal nomads’ and people who have fixed residence. On the other hand, his reference to the agency involved in making the “*texts and languages*” of everyday life “*habitable*”, and his likening of that process to “*a space*” being “*borrowed for a moment by a transient, an immigrant, a nomad*”, draw appropriate attention to the proposition that the ‘space’ of itinerancy is fleeting and

transient. Both these points derive from my earlier discussion of de Certeau's concept of 'tactics of consumption', and from my insistence on constructing itinerancy as occupying the 'middle ground' between the mutually opposed categories of 'unproblematic othering' and 'unproblematic celebration'.

Fifthly, four separate authors have made use of this paired category in diverse and suggestive ways. Weinstein (1994), in his analysis of constructions of and responses to Robot World, a tourist museum in Wisconsin in the United States, stated that "*Popular cultures are evasions of authority of the kind described by de Certeau (1984)*", whose '*poetic descriptions of the tactics involved in ordinary subterfuges against authority powerfully describe the sensibilities of popular culture. . .*' (p. 3). Fiske, in his somewhat controversial book *Understanding popular culture* (1989), lauded de Certeau as "*one of the most sophisticated theorists of the culture and practices of everyday life*" (p. 32), and used de Certeau's concept of 'tactics of consumption' as the basis of his analysis of popular culture in late capitalist countries, particularly the ~~United~~ States of America (pp. 32-43 *passim*); a representative example was his analysis of "*two secretaries spending their lunch hour browsing through stores with no intention to buy*" as a 'tactic of consumption' of which "*boutique owners*" are aware "*but are helpless before them*" (p. 39).

Similarly, Buchanan (1996a) championed de Certeau's construction of an active subject, based on the "*active components*" of "*both the tactical and the strategic*", which "*are in fact principles of action*" (p. 114). Geoffrey Danaher (1995) provided an insightful and corresponding defence against the charge that de Certeau's 'strategies' – 'tactics' and 'place' – 'space' distinc-

tions were *de facto* binary oppositions and therefore conceptually impoverished accounts of social life. Danaher rejected that claim, arguing instead:

*Practice can be understood to be a tactic of the oppressed to the extent that the oppressor–oppressed binary is deconstructable; the very act of practice moves the participant away from the oppressed or coerced position within which a dominant received discourse positions her/him.*  
(p. 134)

Considered together, these four authors regarded ‘tactics’ as “*powerfully describ[ing] the sensibilities of popular culture*” (Weinstein, 1994, p. 3), as “*principles of action*” (Buchanan, 1996a, p. 114) and as helping to move “*the participant away from the oppressed or coerced position within which a dominant received discourse positions her/him*” (Danaher, 1995, p. 134). For these authors, tactics reflect the exercise of human agency in the face of sometimes seemingly overwhelming dominance or oppression. In this context, it is clearly important to acknowledge that institutional power is experienced all the time by people who do not have access to these institutions. For Danaher in particular, it is this agency that ‘deconstructs’ “*the oppressor–oppressed binary*”, suggesting that this “*binary*” is in fact an analytically useful paired category, not an immutable dichotomy. If it were otherwise, there would be no possibility for resistance or positive social change. Both these points I elaborate below. This is also yet another justification for rejecting the notion of itinerancy as being encapsulated in either of the marginalising extremes of ‘unproblematic othering’ or ‘unproblematic celebration’.

Sixthly, Ahearne, in *Michel de Certeau: Interpretation and its other* (1995), “*the first full-length study of Certeau’s thought*” (p. 1), made several references to the conceptual versatility of ‘tactics’ that help to justify their inclusion in this thesis’s conceptual framework. For example, he said of tactics that “*There is nothing retarded or quaintly outdated about such practices. They constitute instead for Certeau constantly mutating responses to constantly mutating distributions of power in successive socioeconomic and symbolic formations*” (p. 161). Thus tactics are both completely ‘up to date’ and “*constantly mutating*”.

Another dimension of ‘tactics’ identified by Ahearne was that they “*must operate in an essentially mobile element. Opportunities and ripostes are not offered up as such but must be seized as they pass, set up as moving targets in transit*” (p. 164). The literal mobility of the Queensland show people highlights the particular relevance of this conception of the “*essentially mobile element*” in which ‘tactics’ are deployed. These various characterisations of ‘tactics’, as being ‘up to date’, “*constantly mutating*”, “*transportable*” as a theoretical ‘model’ and operating “*in an essentially mobile element*”, all enhance the relevance of the concept of ‘tactics of consumption’ to this thesis’s conceptual framework.

Seventhly, Leonie Rowan (1991, 1993, 1994), whose considerable influence on my thinking in this thesis has been noted in the list of acknowledgments, has explored several examples of the intersections between strategies of marginalisation and tactics of subversion, particularly in relation to women and to people of colour. In doing so, she has elaborated an understanding of de Certeau’s thinking that I find persuasive and challenging.

For example, in her paper “*Strategies of marginalization: An overview*” (1991), she outlined a number of ways in which members of marginalised groups are routinely effaced from ‘proper’ recognition and their voices are elided from official discourses. The methodological challenges of her analysis in “*Strategies of marginalization: An overview*” for this thesis are profound, particularly as they pertain to the connections between the show people and myself as the author of the thesis, and they are discussed in Chapter Four.

In an article entitled “*The powers of the marginal: Some tactics for subverting the centre*” (1993), Rowan made several points that are germane to this thesis’s conceptual framework. Her first point was to distinguish between ‘conscious’ (which she distinguished from “*intentional*” [p. 70]) and ‘unconscious’ tactics on the part of marginalised people, on the basis that “*to assume that the ‘other’ act only from unconscious motivations is both naive and presumptive. Such an assumption implies that the marginal are not capable of formulating and implementing conscious oppositional tactics*” (p. 69). Indeed, Rowan’s paper concentrated on tactics “*for the women and people of colour*” with whom she was concerned that were “*both conscious and overt*” (p. 70). This distinction reinforces the proposition that ‘tactics’ do not equate with powerlessness, and that marginalised people are able to exercise agency through careful reflection on their current and desired situations. This would certainly seem to be the case with the Queensland show people.

Rowan’s second point was to explain how the tactic of ‘displacement’ can be a particularly effective method of resisting and subverting the marginalising strategies with which women and people of colour, among

others, are routinely confronted. Thus, “*displacement tactics highlight the unnaturalness of discrimination against difference and work. . .to deconstruct and displace the notion that any binary can be justified*” (p. 70). From this perspective, displacement can be both ‘conscious’ and ‘unconscious’, but it is almost always ‘intentional’, in the sense of deriving from the marginalised group’s self-awareness. For Rowan, this was “*the primary strength of displacement tactics*” (p. 71). That is,

*. . .they originate from the place of the ‘other’ – a place in which the centre has no interest. Thus the margins become tactical positions in which the oppressed gain strength, formulate conscious moments of opposition and work against the marginalizing strategies of the centre, particularly the notion that any truth can be taken as ‘real’.* (p. 71)

This discussion will be taken up in the data analysis chapters, where I shall demonstrate that a significant intended outcome of the Queensland show people’s ‘tactics of consumption’ is the displacement of the marginalising strategies that construct their itinerancy as ‘abnormal’ and the spaces of itinerancy as ephemeral and devalued.

Rowan’s third point was to highlight the importance of repetition as “*one of the keys*” to assisting “*the marginal [to] work unceasingly to introduce their stories into the places of the centre*” (p. 75). This point helps to explain the show people’s persistence, in the interviews cited in the data analysis chapters, in telling me ‘their side of the story’. Clearly they had a common message to impart about their distinctive lifestyle and its marginalising stereotype, and they employed the tactic of repetition with me – as they did with educational providers and others – to ensure that I heard their ‘voice’.

Rowan's fourth point was to depart from de Certeau's (1984, p. 37) characterisation of 'tactics' as "*an art of the weak*". Rowan argued, on the contrary, that "*I do not see tactics or any group of 'others' as automatically 'weak'*" (p. 160).

*Rather, I would suggest that de Certeau's tactical model is a useful means of acknowledging the ability of all groups/individuals to fight back against repressive actions or ideologies, regardless of the degree of repression, by using whatever means are available. More than this, however, the marginal, through diverse and repetitious acts of subversion, can undermine dominant discourse to such an extent that the reductive definitions of 'centre' and 'margin' – which necessitate an awareness of 'strategy' and 'tactic' – become, in themselves, meaningless. (p. 160)*

The analysis advanced in this thesis supports Rowan's careful avoidance of equating 'tactics' with "*the weak*". Certainly the show people's confident and assertive dealings with educational providers and university researchers evoke considerable strength of identity and purpose, which enables them to communicate their vision of improved educational experiences for their children and of consequent positive social and educational change. These actions are certainly 'tactics of consumption' because they are directed consciously against 'strategies of subversion', but they are also based on strength rather than weakness. Furthermore, it *can* be argued that it is people who are 'weak' in particular contexts who are most likely to 'need' to operate



tactically.<sup>4</sup> This understanding resonates with the ‘both/and’ approach to conceptualising itinerancy championed at the end of the previous chapter, whereby itinerancy is understood **as** simultaneously devalued in comparison with sedentarism and equipped to challenge and counteract that devaluing.

The effect of this discussion of other authors’ applications and critiques of de Certeau’s ‘strategies’ – ‘tactics’ paired category has been to justify, and in some cases to extend, my appropriation of ‘tactics of consumption’ **as** a major component of this thesis’s conceptual framework. Generally these authors found this paired category to be analytically and empirically flexible and transferable, rather than disablingly reductionist. Ahearne (1995) expressed this well when he argued:

*‘Strategies’ and ‘tactics’ cannot necessarily be set against each other as opposing forces in a clearly defined zone of combat. Rather, as Certeau presents them, they enable us as concepts to discern a number of*

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4 Ahearne (1995) concurred with the principle underlying Rowan’s (1994) critique of de Certeau’s (1984) depiction of ‘tactics’ as “*an art of the weak*” (p. 37), stating, “*This [depiction] seems mistaken*” (p. 162). By contrast, Fiske (1989) appeared to endorse de Certeau’s depiction when he asserted, “*Guerillatactics are the art of the weak; they never challenge the powerful in open warfare, for that would be to invite defeat, but maintain their own opposition within and against the social order dominated by the powerful*” (p. 19). My following the lead of Rowan (1994) inclines me to agree that ‘tactics of consumption’ *can* indeed be likened to “*guerilla tactics*”, but to add that “*guerillatactics*” generally reflect strength – of purpose and resolve if not of power – rather than weakness.

*heterogeneous movements across different distributions of power.* (p. 163)

This is certainly the use to which the concept ‘tactics of consumption’ will be put in this thesis: to “discern” the “heterogeneous movements” across both the Queensland show circuits and educational provision for the show children, which from that perspective can be regarded as “different distributions of power”. This very fluid and shifting approach accords closely with the anti-essentialist approach to understanding itinerancy advocated in this thesis.

### ‘Place’ and ‘space’

‘Place’–‘space’ is another of de Certeau’s paired categories, and its significance for this thesis is twofold. The first point is that this category ‘matches’ the ‘strategies’–‘tactics’ paired category, in the sense that ‘tactics of consumption’ are used to change ‘the place’ of ‘the proper’, however temporarily, into ‘a space’. The second point is that, given that itinerancy consists of movement across conventionally separate and logically distinct spaces, de Certeau’s conception of ‘space’ is salient to understanding ambivalent constructions of the physical and symbolic spaces of itinerancy.

Having reiterated these two points, I wish to make two additional ones at this juncture. The first is that my reading of *The practice of everyday life* (de Certeau, 1984) and *Heterologies: Discourse on the other* (de Certeau, 1986), discussed in the two previous subsections, evoked several productive resonances with my analysis of the show people’s movements through the spaces of the educational provision developed for their children. The second

point is that de Certeau's 'place'–'space' paired category is far more contested and controversial than his distinction between 'strategies' and 'tactics'. I argue here that this is because his conception of 'place' and 'space' generates considerable intellectual ambivalence in a large number of commentators. Again, my purpose here is not to provide a definitive resolution of this ambivalence. Instead, my intention is to relate instances of this ambivalence directly to the conceptual framework underpinning the thesis.

Thus, several authors have both applied and challenged de Certeau's distinction between 'place' and 'space'. Ahearne was largely complimentary, arguing about de Certeau *"that this intellectual strategy consisted precisely in an endeavour to discern and to make ethical and aesthetic space for particular form of interruption"* (p. 3). For me, Ahearne's construction of de Certeau in this way highlighted de Certeau's desire to recognise, and therefore validate, specific 'tactics of consumption' by variously marginalised groups. I conceive this thesis as having a similar purpose and function in the particular case of the show people; I consider in Chapter Four the ethical implications of this conception.

Rowan (1994) was similarly complimentary about the 'place'–'space' paired category. She emphasised *"the connection between de Certeau's notion of 'proper' places, the corresponding notion of illegitimate spaces, and the marginalising strategy of explanation"* (p. 25). She argued, *"This distinction [between 'places' and 'spaces'] is connected to the strategy's ability to circulate definitions of and discourses about the 'unlocated other' which emphasise the normality of the strategy and the aberrance of virtually everything everyone else"* (p. 26). I discuss the ethical implications for this

thesis of “*themarginalising strategy of explanation*” in Chapter Four. For the moment I wish to emphasise that the show people, on account of their itinerancy, are almost literally “*theunlocated other*”: their regular movement from one ‘place’ to another renders them as having no ‘place’ of their own and therefore as lacking location and hence legitimacy and power. Terry Evans (1998) recognised this crucial point when he noted: “*Showchildren occupy or traverse a territory rather than a place*” (p. xii). This indicates that de Certeau’s distinction between ‘place’ and ‘space’ is analytically powerful for the argument prosecuted in this thesis.

By contrast, Balides (1993) was far more ambivalent about the intellectual value of that distinction. Certainly, in her analysis of constructions of women in American films in the early 1900s, she differentiated between de Certeau’s conception of how ‘place’ is transformed into ‘space’ through the deployment of ‘tactics of consumption’ and the cinema analyst Stephen Heath’s (1981; cited in Balides, 1993, pp. 25-26) argument that “*space. . . becomes place in the movement of narrative*” (Balides, 1993, p. 26) – that is, “*through the continual inscription of the spectator in the diegetic world of the film, which is effected through the spectator’s identification with the camera and with the looks of characters*” (p. 25).

For Balides, the point of drawing on de Certeau’s conception was to “*displace this priority given to vision*” (p. 26) in Heath’s understanding of ‘space’. Thus she endorsed the fact that “*inde Certeau’s analysis space and place are distinct regimes of location*”, and that “*de Certeau delineates a space different from that of perspectival vision*” (p. 26). Furthermore, “*Place. . . is bound up with perspective and a panoptic vision*” (p. 27), which

contributed to “*the perspectival view of de Certeau’s ‘place’*” (p. 28). Balides used this analysis to support her identification of both ‘place’ and ‘space’ in *A windy day on the roof*, a film made in 1904. Balides argued that the plot of the film, in which a house painter *gazed* voyeuristically at a woman hanging out laundry on the roof of her apartment building, “*illustrates a further sense in which space can be understood to take place*” (p. 29). On the one hand, “*In the painter’s look at the woman, the practice of everyday life (space) is subordinated to relations of looking (place)*” (p. 29). On the other hand, “*The film ends with the woman alone in the shot and an assertion of the visibility of this other space – the space of everyday life*” (p. 29). This analysis is similar to those of Ahearne (1995) and Rowan (1994) in emphasising the analytical fluidity of the ‘place’ – ‘space’ paired category.

However, Balides expressed considerable doubt about other **aspects** of de Certeau’s distinction between ‘place’ and ‘space’. For example, in a passage that read somewhat oddly beside her able application cited above of this distinction to her own work (and also with the fact that she followed the passage with the rather dismissive comment, “*This [accusation of binary oppositions] is not the import of my argument*” [p. 27]”), Balides stated:

*In some discussions of de Certeau’s work there is a problematic tendency to construct a binary opposition between place and space in which place is associated with a deterministic and monolithic conception of use and space is understood to mean – somewhat axiomatically – differentiated uses and resistance. (p. 27)*

Balides' major concern about this alleged "*problematic tendency to construct a binary opposition*" was what she identified **as** a masculinist bias in de Certeau's work. She argued that for de Certeau "*the threat of the city ('the dark space') is identified with the figure of woman*" (p. 27). Furthermore, "*de Certeau also identifies place with a masculine vision (the distanced view of the voyeur), linking perspective to a sexually implicated looking (the lust to be a viewpoint and nothing more')*" (p. 27).

Although it is not 'the place' of this thesis to comment on charges of oppositional masculinism levelled at de Certeau, my response, phrased in terms of the theoretical concerns actuating the thesis, is that Balides' analysis belies the fact that feminist scholars (notably Rowan, 1991, 1993, 1994) have effectively used de Certeau's notion of 'space' (despite Balides' claim that this is an excessively feminised concept) to deconstruct masculinist 'places' such **as** Australian literary texts. Furthermore, McKay (1996) had no doubt that there was a great deal of value for contemporary feminist theorising of de Certeau's work

*The value of de Certeau's work for feminist analysis is that it reconceptualises the nature of change so that feminist thought on the everyday is edged beyond the binary of oppression and resistance. This insight combined with the polemological foregrounding of a differentiated analysis of power relations sketches out a framework in which the increasingly complex nature of women's daily existence can be addressed. (p. 77)*

From this perspective, Balides' critique here seems to **me** to introduce, prompted by her ambivalence about whether de Certeau should be 'read' as 'pro' or 'anti' marginalised groups, an unhelpful additional binary opposition that elides the human agency that de Certeau insisted was exercised in 'spaces' and that she identified in her own championing of de Certeau's conception of 'space' over that of Heath. The parallel with this thesis is clear: I seek to deploy de Certeau's conception of 'space', in alliance with his concept of 'tactics of consumption', to help to explain how the show people are able to move out of the marginalising spaces of itinerancy and to engage in resistance and transformation – an analysis that would not be possible if I 'read' de Certeau **as** being intellectually opposed to such a movement.

Buchanan (1996a) suggested the application of an additional term – "*heterophenomenological space*" – to de Certeau's distinction between 'place' and 'space', although he intended this additional term to function **as** extending, rather than correcting, of de Certeau's work. Considering this suggested term provides a partial 'antidote' to the ambivalence towards de Certeau's 'place'–'space' distinction displayed by Balides (1993).

Buchanan's (1996a) account of de Certeau's work concentrated on "*his reconceptualisation of the problem of theorising space*" (p. 111). Buchanan argued that postmodernist constructions of space "*have pushed the subject into the steepest decline*" (p. 113). By contrast, he sought to demonstrate, through his appropriation of de Certeau's thought, "*that subjectivity is not in decline, and that agency is still possible despite the baffling advances of technology, and the resulting incomprehensible futurity of space*" (pp. 111-112).

*“Heterophenomenological space”* was Buchanan’s own neologism, based on what he argued was the logical extension of de Certeau’s theorising of space. By *“heterophenomenology”* Buchanan meant *“aphenomenology predicated by a heterogeneously constituted subject which does not take for granted the unity of the body”* (p. 112). This notion, derived directly from de Certeau’s work, focussed on the agency of subjectivity in relation to space. Thus, *“It is this agency that heterophenomenology seeks to restore against Jameson, and the trend in cultural studies generally, to place the subject at the mercy of space”* (p. 122). Furthermore, *“Treating space as a perspective cannot put us in touch with space itself, but it can put us in contact with a certain way of constructing space”* (p. 128). In this thesis, I am interested in identifying the Queensland show people’s constructions of the multiple spaces of their itinerancy, which Buchanan’s extension of de Certeau’s conceptualisation indicates derive from their agential subjectivities.

This discussion has indicated that de Certeau’s ‘place’–‘space’ paired category has both champions and detractors, and that the same author sometimes switches from one view to the other. I have argued that this uncertainty about whether de Certeau’s distinction is to be applied or contested derives from ambivalence about his conceptualisation of ‘space’ – an ambivalence that has prompted the insertion of additional terminology of varying degrees of helpfulness. My own response to this discussion is to reassert the direct relevance of de Certeau’s emphasis on ‘space’ as the site of the deployment of ‘tactics of consumption’ to understanding how the Queensland show people exercise agency in the spaces of their itinerancy. That emphasis is therefore central to the logic of the study’s conceptual framework, because it helps me to move from an ‘either/or’ approach to



conceptualising itinerancy to the ‘middle ground’ of the ‘both/and’ approach to which this thesis aspires.

### **Marginalisation and resistance**

De Certeau did not construct ‘marginalisation’ – ‘resistance’ **as** an explicit paired category. Nevertheless, a number of authors has commented on one or other of these terms **as** they envisaged de Certeau conceptualising those terms. Furthermore, at least some of these authors, in contesting de Certeau’s thought on marginalisation and its resistance, demonstrated ambivalence – which sometimes became operationalised **as** criticism – about where precisely he positioned himself in relation to that issue. The issue, clearly, is crucial to this thesis and the logic of its conceptual framework, **because**, in combination with transformation, marginalisation and resistance constitute the central dimensions of itinerancy explored in my study.

Rowan’s (1994) doctoral thesis made several points that are pertinent to marginalisation **as** it was theorised by de Certeau. At a general level, her thesis, which explored the constructions of gender and race in six Australian literary texts, revealed the fruitfulness of applying de Certeau’s account of marginalisation and resistance to Rowan’s selected site of identity construction and contestation. Specifically, I **am** concerned with three elements of that study that have particular significance for the way that marginalisation is understood in this thesis.

Firstly, Rowan conceptualised both gender and **race** in terms with strong parallels to my interpretation of the dominant discourse in constructions of itinerancy. In a seemingly inexorable set of logical connections, she posited that “*marks of difference determine an individual’s position—mainstream or marginal—within society*” (p. 22). For the Queensland show people, their itinerancy is a ‘mark of difference’ that positions them as ‘marginal’ in relation to the ‘mainstream’ ‘norm’ of fixed residence.

Next, Rowan identified “*not only difference, but the connection between difference and a perception of ‘lack’*” (p. 22). Thus the show people are perceived as lacking the physical and symbolic appurtenances of ‘home’, with its concomitant role in clearly giving people a ‘place’ of their own and in saying to the world, ‘This is what I **am** like’.

Then Rowan analysed these ‘marks of difference’ and this perceived ‘lack’ as “*acts of violence which attempt to exclude the voice (and frequently the bodies) of the ‘other’ from legitimate discourse, from the public sphere, and from power*” (p. 23). This relates to my argument in Chapter One, where I positioned this thesis **as** seeking to record the voices of the show people about marginalisation, resistance and transformation. The data analysis chapters contain many instances of the show people’s consciousness of themselves being cut off by their itinerancy from “*legitimate discourse, from the public sphere, and from power*”. From that perspective, Rowan’s very succinct account of the connections among ‘marks of difference’, ‘lack’ and ‘acts of violence’ encapsulates the marginalising strategies against which the show people deploy their ‘tactics of consumption’.

Secondly, Rowan referred to *“the absence”* in Jessica Anderson’s novel *An ordinary lunacy “of a counternarrative that could be seen as an alternative to masculinist hegemony”* (p. 31). This notion of ‘counternarrative’ is a crucial element of the effective employment of ‘tactics of consumption’. If the show people are ultimately to subvert the marginalising discourses that render them as different, lacking, having no voice and illegitimate, they need to articulate and prosecute an alternative and more positive construction of itinerancy, one that emphasises the social and educational benefits of this lifestyle and the legitimacy of itinerant people to speak about such issues as Australian cultural traditions and educational provision. I argue in this thesis that the show people’s ‘consumption’ of the educational provision designed for their children is an important site for the elaboration of precisely this kind of ‘counternarrative’, whereby their previously silenced voices can be heard by those who reside in ‘proper’ ‘places’. Clearly these conceptions of ‘counternarrative’ and ‘voice’ are predicated on marginalisation’s constituent elements, among them the ‘marks of violence’, ‘lack’ and ‘acts of violence’ discussed above. (The thesis is also considered a ‘counternarrative’ through its contribution to helping those voices to be heard.)

Thirdly, Rowan emphasised *“the disputatious nature of marginalisation; the many different ways of conceiving and responding to otherness;. . .”* (p. 235). My response to *“the disputatious nature of marginalisation”* is to emphasise the shifting and fluid ‘nature’ of itinerancy as it is practised by the show people, and to use ‘tactics of consumption’, ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ as conceptual resources that in combination explain both how show people are marginalised and how they are able to resist and

transform that marginalisation. (This highlights anew the need for a ‘both /and’, rather than an ‘either/or’, approach to constructing itinerancy.) Furthermore, “*the disputatious nature of marginalisation*” helps to explain the ambivalence that some authors have displayed with regard to de Certeau’s account of marginalisation and resistance.

Some authors have championed de Certeau as giving hope to marginalised groups by assigning to them the possibility of active and effective resistance. From this perspective, Bauman (1991) described de Certeau’s analysis in *The practice of everyday life* (1984) of *la perruque*, which de Certeau called “*the worker’s own work disguised as work for his [sic] employer*” (p. 25), as “*the tool of defence of the self-regulated sphere of autonomy*” (Bauman, 1991, p. 252, n. 19). Similarly, Stavropoulos (1995) relied heavily on de Certeau’s analysis in *The practice of everyday life* (1984) of consumption as the exercise of agency to support her call for postcolonialist theories of ‘representation’ to take proper and sufficient account of resistance, which “*has to be central to any approach which is serious about the revising of power relations*” (p. 52).

Furthermore, Goodall (1995) drew on de Certeau’s work, particularly in *The practice of everyday life* (1984), to support his argument that popular culture is not simply the ‘poor relation’ of high culture, but rather is the site of considerable and productive resistance:

*The work of de Certeau seeks. . .to identify the ways in which the people and their culture are not simply suppressed, or made into unwilling recipients of values and discourses they neither want nor understand, but actively resist and expropriate the dominant culture. (p. 75)*

Appropriately for this thesis's conceptual framework, Goodall pointed to significant parallels between the ideas of de Certeau and Mikhail Bakhtin, parallels to which I shall return in the next section of this chapter.

Writing in a similar vein, Jenkins (1992) stated that “*De Certeau gives us terms for discussing ways that the subordinate classes elude or escape institutional control, for analyzing locations where popular meanings are produced outside of official interpretive practice*” (p. 26). For Jenkins, de Certeau's conceptualisation of marginalisation and resistance was analytically relevant and enabling – just as this thesis **finds** that same conceptualisation.

Schirato (1993) used his largely approving summary of de Certeau's ideas about popular culture to highlight the centrality to those ideas of marginalisation and resistance:

*The thesis de Certeau puts forward. . . is that popular culture is unswervingly subversive of official culture, and the interests official culture serves, including capitalists, the state, power élites – those Bourdieu calls the dominant. Popular culture is subversive, for de Certeau, because it **is** constituted by a heterogeneity which is oppositional to, and a denial of, homogeneity, community and, eventually, hegemony. Popular culture, however, not only carries the traces of its own difference; even more importantly, it carries the marks of violence of its own exclusion **from** that hegemonic community; that is to say it tells the stories that hegemonic ideology works to erase. (p. 283)*

In contrast to these largely laudatory accounts of de Certeau's conception of resistance in relation to marginalisation, other authors argued that that conception was excessively 'celebratory' of resistance. Thus, although Weinstein (1994) conceded that de Certeau's account of resistance was influential, and that he had used that account "*because of the powerful reading that it generates of the Robot World text*" (p. 6), he noted that "*the oppositional model had traditionally used a series of binary distinctions to describe the relation and difference between the popular and the official*" (p. 3), a practice followed by de Certeau in his work. Weinstein considered that "*These dichotomous distinctions are often inadequate to capture the overall complexity that is involved in popular cultures*" (p. 4), suggesting that there ~~was~~ more resistance than de Certeau's thought was able to conceive.

Precisely the opposite charge – that de Certeau constructed more resistance than ~~was~~ actually possible – ~~was~~ laid by a couple of other authors. McKay (1994) criticised de Certeau's allegedly excessive celebration of popular resistance of marginalisation by claiming that it implied "*fetishising the resistant status of everyday practices*" (p. 67). For McKay, "*The emergence of resistance becomes a cyclical, quasi-natural phenomenon rather than a potentiality whose realisation is contingent upon a particular configuration of power relations*" (p. 68).

Similarly, Ahearne (1995) argued that, "*in his concern to uncover a kind of polymorphous flexibility*", "*Certeau's analyses run the risk of lapsing intermittently into an unqualified apologetics for ordinary practices*" (p. 151). He further charged de Certeau with exaggerating the capacity of people to resist marginalising situations, using "*an extreme example*" to do so:

*. . . he tends to assume that there will always be a given quota of inventiveness to ensure that people can 'get round' whatever mechanisms seek to organize and inform them. One misses in Certeau's account a note of threat, the sense that what he is analysing can never be guaranteed but can undeniably be stamped out in specific cases (an extreme example would be the behaviour of the popular majorities in Nazi or totalitarian states). (p. 185)*

So Weinstein (1994) apparently thought that de Certeau downplayed the level of available resistance, while McKay (1996) and Ahearne (1995) accused him of exaggerating that level. Faced with this kind of evident contradiction, my response is to pursue a cautious and self-reflexive middle ground. In particular, I assert that the data analysis chapters of this thesis will demonstrate how the show people's 'tactics of consumption' enable them to engage in resistance of their marginalised itinerancy and in the process to turn the 'place' of their children's educational provision into a 'space' for a more enabling conception of itinerancy to be operationalised. Certainly this level of resistance does not 'go with the territory' of itinerancy, but instead derives from the show people's self-conscious constructions of their and others' identities and their formulation of various 'tactics of consumption' and their efforts to promote 'creative understanding'. The point is that, aided by these resources and techniques, the show people are able to carry out 'just enough' resistance for their purposes.

This suggests that hypothetical debates about 'not enough' or 'too much' resistance in de Certeau's thought need to be replaced by appropriate applications of his ideas to empirical sites of marginalisation and resistance.

Otherwise, the ambivalence about whether he conceived of ‘not enough’ or ‘too much’ resistance is likely to preclude productive analyses of ‘real life’ situations. After all, in the final analysis it is the outcomes of resistance that are most important. This point also articulates with my determination to eschew the twin poles of itinerancy as ‘unproblematic othering’ and as ‘unproblematic celebration’ identified at the end of the previous chapter: **as** with the ultimately futile argument about ‘not enough’/‘too much’ resistance, the ‘either/or’ approach to understanding itinerancy that they encapsulate must give way to a much more fluid set of conceptual categories contained in the ‘bothland’ approach championed here.

Justification for my position on this issue was provided by Buchanan’s (1996b) review of Ahearne’s (1995) biography of de Certeau. While Buchanan’s review was as largely complimentary of the biography **as** the biography was of de Certeau (despite possible appearances to the contrary in this subsection), Buchanan departed from Ahearne in the latter’s conviction that de Certeau emphasised resistance and subversion beyond a point where they could realistically pertain in such extreme situations **as Nazi** concentration camps during World War Two. On the contrary, Buchanan’s citation of literature by survivors from such situations led him to proclaim “*that de Certeau is entirely correct*” (p. 152). This was because

*...de Certeau does not assume ‘resilience’, he posits it. One does not fall back on ‘inventiveness’ in order to find an inner resource **of** ‘resilience’, rather one **is** ‘resilient’ because **one** is ‘inventive’. This ‘resilience’ is possible because ‘inventiveness’ is a practice, not a specific outcome. This ‘inventiveness’, [sic] is, **for** de Certeau, a matter*



*of turning existing materials to alternative ends. A matter of ‘making with’ (‘faire avec’) not ‘making do’. Thus, de Certeau does not ‘valorise resistance’. . . he formalises it. (p. 152)*

Buchanan’s interpretation of de Certeau’s construction of human inventiveness and resilience strongly evokes the show people’s own claims about how they negotiate their way through the multiple spaces of their itinerant lifestyle. This interpretation also provides a more agential and enabling view of social life than “*existing criticisms of de Certeau*” that “*conform to a doctrinal view of his work*” (p. 154). I seek in this thesis to favour the agential and enabling over the “*doctrinal*”, and thereby to record my interpretation of the show people’s itinerant spaces – particularly in situations where the “*doctrinal*” rests on unconscious ambivalences about de Certeau’s thought (or else on the false dichotomy of itinerancy **as** either ‘unproblematic othering’ or ‘unproblematic celebration’).

Not that I **seek** to champion de Certeau against all criticisms by other authors. **As** I explicate below, I **am** particularly concerned by the evident incapacity of ‘tactics of consumption’ to lead to a change in ‘the rules of the game’. With regard to marginalisation and resistance, which are my focus here, I take heed of some timely reminders and warning notes by some authors about the theoretical **risk** of homogenising resistance. Thus, although I disagree with Weinstein’s (1994) comment, in reference to de Certeau, that “*he overly celebrates. . . resistance*” (p. 3), I concur with his supplementary assertion that “*the celebratory attitude tends to overlook the ways that the resistance embodied in popular culture comes cluttered with racist and sexist contradictions*” (p. 3).

Similarly, I have noted Jenhns' (1992) cautious warning

*...against absolute statements of the type that appear all too frequently within the polemical rhetoric of cultural studies. Readers are not always resistant; all resistant readings are not necessarily progressive readings; the 'people' do not always recognize their conditions of alienation and subordination. (p. 34)*

Moreover, Ahearne (1995) asserted that de Certeau's "writing is not entirely immune from the dangers inherent in advocating on principle the worth of the 'popular' (despite the displacement effected by the critical dissection ~~of~~ this term)" (p. 185). By this, Ahearne meant that "Certeau tends to valorize resistance **as** such, whereas this may constitute in some cases a damaging problem which has to be addressed" (p. 186). This contention recalls Frow's (1991) criticism that de Certeau's construction of 'the people' assumes both the homogeneity of such a group and that this group "necessarily operates in a progressive way" (p. 58). In other words, celebrating and championing resistance tends to downplay the potential for resisters to engage in equally repressive and marginalising strategies when they gain power themselves.

My response to these diverse warnings is to identify their **two** separate but related elements. One element is the abjuration to avoid homogenising resistance. This is a crucial point, to which I shall return in Chapter Four and the ~~data~~ analysis chapters. I acknowledge the importance of seeking to refrain from eliding differences within the show circuits and among the population that for ethical appropriateness and linguistic convenience I designate **as** 'the show people'. (Such an approach, indeed, would lead me back to the hnd of

literature identified in the previous chapter that rested on the romanticising of the itinerant lifestyle.) This is significant not only because such elisions have the potential to achieve the obverse of my objective in this thesis (by portraying show people **as** a single, passive group), but also because a major thrust of my argument in the second data analysis chapter is that the shifts in meaning and understanding between ‘showie’ and ‘non-showie’, and among different kinds of ‘showies’, are a principal component of the show people’s resistance of their marginalising experiences.

The other element of the warnings posed by various commentators on de Certeau’s work is the analytical risk of rendering marginalised people **as** folk heroes who, with ‘right on their side’, battle against evil and powerful enemies. Again, I seek consciously to avoid this potential tendency in this thesis, both because such a tendency would be patronising, even insulting, to a group of people with considerable pride and articulateness, and also because this portrayal would contradict my understanding of the educational providers from the Brisbane School of Distance Education **as** well-intentioned and hard working professionals seeking to enhance educational access for one of their client groups.

The effect of this discussion has been to confirm that many commentators find – as I do – de Certeau’s theorisation of marginalisation and resistance fruitful and compelling. Furthermore, rather than being constituted **as** binary opposites, these terms emerge **as** floating signifiers. That is, like the show people whose lives are described in this thesis, ‘marginalisation’ and ‘resistance’ are fluid and mobile and need to be analysed in context as contingent and provisional. It is this theoretical fluidity and mobility that

attracts me to de Certeau's ideas, because they are precisely the necessary features of a conceptual framework geared to explaining the show people's interactions among themselves and with 'outsiders'. More specifically, they are vital characteristics of my efforts to explain the marginalisation, resistance and transformation of the show people's lifeworlds, and to prosecute a fluid and shifting understanding of itinerancy that can help to sponsor a counter-narrative about it and about Traveller education.

### **Change and transformation**

At this point it is appropriate to synthesise my response to the various critiques of de Certeau's distinctions between such paired categories as 'strategies' – 'tactics' and 'place' – 'space' (and to some extent between 'marginalisation' and 'resistance') – a response that goes to the heart of my justification for deploying de Certeau's ideas in this thesis. The charge that de Certeau's thinking is excessively polarised, because it is reducible to a rigid set of binary oppositions, is misplaced for three crucial reasons. Firstly, this criticism downplayed the extent to which individuals and groups are in fact routinely positioned as being relatively powerless or marginalised. In other words, many people perceive themselves as being passive consumers of social life rather than as exercising a decisive influence over the unfolding of events to which they have to respond. To ignore or downplay this fact seeks – consciously or otherwise – to replace what is to me de Certeau's very accurate and knowledgeable politicised analysis of social life that identifies something of the real scale of marginalisation of many disparate groups at the beginning

of the twenty-first century with a far less satisfactory utopian view of that social life.

Secondly, the criticism of de Certeau's work as being too polarised ignores what to me is a great strength of de Certeau's thought: his explicit recognition, and valuing, of the human agency of the less powerful. *The practice of everyday life* (1984) and *Heterologies* (1986), and the applications of these books by other scholars, are replete with examples of people engaging in tactics of various kinds that make a material and psychological difference to their situations. So the implication that de Certeau's work is reducible to binary oppositions and therefore positions the less powerful as having no control over their lives ignores this evidence of marginalised people having a capacity to change important aspects of their lives. Ironically, this criticism also forgets that a major motivation for de Certeau's work was a similar criticism by him of Foucault's thought, which indicates that he was particularly keen to 'redress the balance' in favour of the agency of the marginalised.

Thirdly, this criticism ignores the fact that de Certeau did not portray marginalised people as only engaging in tactics of subversion. On the contrary, he eschewed a homogenised view of 'the powerful' and 'the powerless' (which lies at the heart of the criticism about binary oppositions) in favour of a much more heterogeneous analysis of social life. This prompted him to argue that within marginalised groups relatively powerful individuals sometimes engage in strategies that at least potentially can perpetuate the marginalisation of their peers. This might happen, for example, with tokenism, when 'the centre' coopts, and thereby 'buys the silence', of particularly

articulate and therefore potentially troublesome members of a marginalised group. For these reasons, then, de Certeau's distinctions between 'strategies' and 'tactics', and between 'place' and 'space', far from being excessively polarised and therefore static, are actually dynamic and fluid and therefore very well suited to informing my response to these questions. This suitability in turn underscores the appropriateness of de Certeau's ideas in highlighting the multifaceted dimensions of itinerancy and its incapacity of reduction to the twin poles of 'unproblematic othering' and 'unproblematic celebration'.

My criticism of critiques of de Certeau's alleged 'binary oppositions', then, is prompted by my assertion that the 'litmus test' for such critiques is the extent of change and transformation in the show people's situation. That is, if the show people are able to change their marginalised status by using both overt political action and conscious and unconscious resistance, that will be an indication that the critiques were overstated.

I turn now to another reason for discussing transformation at this juncture (apart from the fact that the latter is one of the three key concepts guiding this thesis). This reason is that such a discussion introduces my own area of greatest ambivalence about de Certeau's thought. This ambivalence is encapsulated in my concern that, relating this argument to the show people, the impact of de Certeau's theory is such that the show people can engage in a number of 'tactics of consumption', and they can fleetingly make 'the place' of 'the proper' into 'a space' of their own, but in the end 'the rules of the games' remain precisely the same as at the beginning of the contest.

To elaborate this argument: demonstrating that the show people ‘consume’ the educational provision established for their children in ways that resist and subvert the marginalising strategies of ‘the centre’, and that turn ‘the place’ of the educational norms associated with fixed residence into ‘the space’ of itinerancy, although it is significant, is inadequate in one crucial respect. This is that it fails to explain fully how and why the show people are able to contribute positively and substantially to social and educational change and transformation, encapsulated in the greater recognition and valuing of their distinctive lifestyle and educational needs: they are positioned always **as** ‘making do’ and never as re-making or reconstructing. **As** the next section of this chapter explains, this point is my justification for combining the theoretical resources of de Certeau’s ‘tactics of consumption’ and Bakhtin’s ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’, because it is through exercising such practices that show people are enabled to transform ‘the rules of the game’ and to make more enduring positive changes to the spaces of itinerancy.

My ambivalence about this crucial element of de Certeau’s thought is reflected in **my** endorsement of **two** seemingly contradictory views of that thought **as** it pertained to change and transformation. On the one hand, as Aheame (1995) pointed out, *“Questions of historical rupture and transition are central to Certeau’s work. How do social orders (and the human subjects who live within them) cease to be organized in certain ways and come to be organized in others?”* (p. 27).

Similarly, for Rowan (1994), the ‘binary oppositions’ charge that several commentators levelled at de Certeau’s work “*can be met by the constancy of displacement*” (p. 76), by which she meant that “*to seek the reversal of binaries instead of their displacement is to perpetuate inequalities and injustice*” (p. 77). Drawing on the work of Audré Lorde, she used a vivid metaphor to illustrate her argument about the transformative potential of repetition leading to displacement

*. . .to constantly and ceaselessly introduce difference into repetition is to weaken the master’s control over his house and his tools and to allow for a new understanding of what the house is, how it was built and who[m] it shelters. (p. 77)*

From the same perspective, I dissent from the claim by Budd, Entman and Steinman (1990; cited in Jenkins, 1992, p. 27) that nomadic readers “*may actually be powerless and dependent*” rather than “*uncontainable, restless and free*”, and that “*People who are nomads cannot settle down; they are at the mercy of natural forces they cannot control*”. This seems to replicate the conceptualisation of itinerancy as a ‘deficit’ (and therefore as an ‘unproblematic othering’) that courses through much of the Traveller education literature, a construction that de Certeau’s concepts of ‘tactics of consumption’ and ‘space’ are well suited to assisting me to resist and change.

However, despite my endorsement of Ahearne’s (1995) and Rowan’s (1994) comments as encouraging my dissension from Budd *et alia* (1990), I also concur with Jenkins’ (1992) elaboration of the comments by Budd *et alia*: “*As these writers are quick to note, controlling the means of cultural reception, while an important step, does not provide an adequate substitute*



*for access to the means of cultural production and distribution*" (p. 27). This encapsulates my conviction that 'the rules of the game' do not change sufficiently to transform multiple forms of consumption into privileged sites of production. This is precisely why, in short, I have identified the need to link de Certeau's 'tactics of consumption' with Bakhtin's 'outsidedness' and 'creative understanding'.

I began this subsection by asserting that I would navigate a path through selected applications and critiques of de Certeau's ideas, informed by my commitment to eschewing an 'either/or' approach to conceptualising itinerancy in favour of a 'both/and' approach. At the same time, I posited a paradox in the reception accorded to de Certeau's thought, centred on the fact that many commentators who used his ideas fruitfully in applications to their respective research interests also criticised him for relying on one or more reductive binary oppositions. Furthermore, I argued that that paradox was explicable in terms of the commentators' ambivalence about how to 'read' de Certeau in relation to various paired categories: 'strategies' – 'tactics', 'place' – 'space' and marginalisation – resistance. In addition, I contended that the ambivalence surrounding de Certeau's work reflected his refusal to remain confined to positions or issues within one or other of the terms of these categories, but rather traversed the boundaries keeping them separate.

This proposition combined ambivalence with the itinerancy of the figure of 'the nomad', and therefore provided an explicit link with my earlier critique of the literature on Traveller education. Moreover, some of these ambivalent accounts of de Certeau's paired categories revealed contradictions, such as

Balides' (1993) and McKay's (19%) efforts to render the 'place'–'space' categories **as** excessively masculinist.

Not that I regard ambivalence **as** a phenomenon to be avoided at all costs. On the contrary, I acknowledge and celebrate my own ambivalence about de Certeau's work, an ambivalence that I contend can be theoretically and empirically productive. On the one hand, I regard the paired categories discussed in this subsection, not **as** reductive binary oppositions, but instead **as** shifting and fluid conceptual filters that *can* assist my interpretation of the dynamism and flexibility of the show people's interactions with educational providers. This is particularly true of de Certeau's 'tactics of consumption' and 'space', which I therefore feel justified in making integral to this thesis's conceptual framework. This practice accords with my argument that itinerancy *can* be properly understood only from an anti-essentialist approach that avoids the conceptual traps identified in the literature review in the previous chapter.

On the other hand, I argue that the accumulation of paired categories in de Certeau's work, while not in themselves binary oppositions, leads paradoxically to an incapacity to analyse the possibility of a change to 'the rules of the game'. This incapacity allows the show people to be understood **as** perennially engaging in 'tactics of consumption' and making the 'spaces' of itinerancy closer to their vision of 'home' but still not accessing or transforming 'the place' of 'the proper'. In other words, there are vital issues that this framework cannot identify and attend to. It is this ultimate analytical weakness that provides a cue for my move to the next section, where I outline how Mikhail Bakhtin's notions of 'outsidedness' and 'creative understanding' enable just such a transformation to be envisaged. At the same time, I

should emphasise the need to combine both sets of conceptual resources if I am to pursue the goal of a ‘both/and’ approach to understanding itinerancy and of contributing to a counternarrative of both it and Traveller education. My goal in the next section of the chapter is to locate – by using Bakhtin – analytical resources that allow the identification, not just of marginality and resistance, but also of transformation.

### **3.3 Bakhtin’s notions of ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’**

As with Michel de Certeau, Mikhail Bakhtin’s contribution to this thesis’s conceptual framework is intimately connected to my desire to deploy the strongest available theoretical resources to advance the cause of an anti-essentialist approach to understanding itinerancy. Furthermore, Bakhtin’s contribution is related also to what is effectively a *leitmotif* of the thesis: the ambivalence arising from the spaces of itinerancy. In Bakhtin’s case, not only **has** his thought generated considerable ambivalence among commentators (for example, and again in similarity to de Certeau, in relation to possible feminist appropriations of his ideas), but he also highlighted on many occasions the ambivalence that was fundamental to his conception of social life. This assertion will be demonstrated below, partly in my account of Bakhtin’s notions of ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’. **As** I indicated earlier, in the discussion that follows I construct these two concepts **as** leavening elements that potentially transform ‘the rules of the game’ so that the

marginalised spaces of itinerancy can become meaningful and productive ‘places’ on more than a temporary basis.

In discussing de Certeau’s thought, I moved from his conceptualisation of ‘tactics of consumption’ in two of his works (1984, 1986) to an account of various commentators’ applications and critiques of his thought. With Bakhtin, I have elected to move in the reverse direction, beginning by putting his thought in the perspective of a comparison with that of de Certeau, then proceeding to focus on two of his principal notions – ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ (1986a). The reason for this approach lies in my desire to demonstrate the broad similarities and dissonances between the two theorists’ thinking as a means of explaining and justifying my juxtaposition of certain of their ideas in the conceptual framework of this thesis. This demonstration is likely to be most effective by exploring the broader dimensions of Bakhtin’s thought before concentrating on the two notions selected for deployment in this study.

Accordingly, I shall discuss the following aspects of Bakhtin’s thought in this section of the chapter:

- Bakhtin and de Certeau
- ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’.

### **3.3.1     Bakhtin and de Certeau**

There are several points of implicit comparison between Bakhtin and de Certeau, even though to my knowledge they remained unaware of each other's work. In tracing these points of comparison, I demonstrate that Bakhtin and de Certeau are not conceptually incompatible but can logically be linked without misrepresenting either thinker's body of work. In the next subsection of the chapter I outline and justify my focus on 'outsidedness' and 'creative understanding' as conceptual resources capable of explaining how 'the rules of the game', within which de Certeau's 'tactics of consumption' ultimately reside, can be challenged and transformed.

Firstly, I draw on Morson and Emerson's extensive biography *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a prosaics* (1990). In that text, the authors identified three "*global concepts*", which they argued underpinned all Bakhtin's work and gave an enduring coherence to writings that were published more than fifty years apart. One of those "*global concepts*" was "*prosaics*". This was a term that Bakhtin never used and that Morson and Emerson coined as a neologism to encompass a major theme in Bakhtin's work. According to Morson and Emerson, prosaics in its broader sense "*is a form of thinking that presumes the importance of the everyday, the ordinary, the 'prosaic'*" (p. 16). They argued that in its more restricted sense, as "*a theory of literature that privileges prose in general and the novel in particular over the poetic genres*", prosaics "*is, so far as we know, Bakhtin's unique and original creation*" (p. 15).

The concept of “*prosaics*” would appear to resonate with de Certeau’s continuing interest in daily life, as the title of his book *The practice of everyday life* (1984) most obviously exemplified. There were also echoes of de Certeau’s ideas (although his name was not mentioned) in Morson and Emerson’s account of Bakhtin’s understanding of *prosaics*, such as in the sections “*Prosaics and everyday language*” (pp. 21-23), “*Prosaics as a philosophy of the ordinary*” (pp. 23-25), “*Prosaics and ethics*” (pp. 25-27) and “*Prosaics and systems*” (pp. 27-32). The significance of what at first appears to be a somewhat tenuous connection lies in highlighting the fact that, although both Bakhtin and de Certeau were primarily interested in language and literature, their respective ideas had profoundly material and practical implications. That is, Bakhtin and de Certeau understood that the issues to which their concepts related extended far beyond the intellectual sphere and were inextricably linked with the daily lives of ‘ordinary’ people. This is another point of justification for applying selected **aspects** of those ideas in juxtaposition to the empirical site with which this thesis is concerned.

Furthermore, the assertion that Bakhtin, like de Certeau, was deeply concerned with the empirical contexts in which his ideas were grounded was supported by Jones (1993). For example, Jones argued that Bakhtin questioned the capacity of theoretical systems

*...to account satisfactorily for the experience of everyday life, or to provide an adequate basis for understanding linguistic communication, interpersonal relations, moral choice, aesthetic judgement, literary texts or indeed any sphere of action or enquiry which takes the experience of everyday life as its chosen field.* (p. 244)

Jones' (1993) argument evokes de Certeau's similar interest in the ethical dimensions of 'everyday life'. Furthermore, Jones implicitly approved of Morson and Emerson's (1990) neologism 'prosaics', which he described as "*a form of thinking (or style of enquiry) that presumes the overriding importance of the everyday, the prosaic, in language as in experience in general*" (p. 250). This summary resonates with de Certeau's account of the importance of everyday life as the site of the exercise of agency, rather than as the setting for wholly meaningless and trivial concerns. Furthermore, it underscores the crucial point that both Bakhtin and de Certeau would be likely to have endorsed an analysis of an empirical site of 'everyday life' from the perspective of marginalisation, resistance and transformation – the foci of this study's research questions. Like de Certeau and Bakhtin, I conceive of everyday life as manifesting the interplay of much deeper and more fundamental forces and processes – in this case, marginalisation, resistance and transformation in relation to itinerancy and Traveller education.

Secondly, Morson and Emerson (1990) articulated what they identified as Bakhtin's aversion to binary oppositions:

*As we have seen, Bakhtin rejected the Hobson's choices of modern thought: either there is a system or there is nothing; either there are comprehensive closed structures or there is chaos; either there is in principle an all-encompassing explanatory system or there is total relativism (or perhaps: either God exists, or all is permitted). The assumption that these are the only alternatives has blinded critics to the possibility of radically different kinds of truth, unity, and perspective. (p. 233)*

This critique of commentators who have mistakenly constructed Bakhtin's ideas as being excessively polarised, whereas he actually argued strongly against binary oppositions, is very similar to my earlier argument that many of the charges of binary oppositions directed against de Certeau have resulted from ambivalence about, and misunderstandings of, his work. The same kind of ambivalence is evident in several of the following points of comparison between Bakhtin and de Certeau. Certainly the assertion that Bakhtin's thought was consciously anti-binaristic in structure helps to justify my deployment of two of his concepts to explain how it is possible to alter fundamentally the supposedly fixed and immutable 'rules of the game'. This resonates with my earlier, repeated statement of preference to eschew the polarised 'either/or' for the more dynamic and mobile 'both/and' approach to conceptualising itinerancy.

Thirdly, Roderick (1995) contended that Bakhtin, through his articulation of the concept of carnival to denote the reversal of 'normal' social rules, aligned himself explicitly with the 'consumers' rather than the 'producers' of society:

*Bakhtin removes the complexity of ..[a] spatial model of class society, making the body politic divisible into only two stratum [sic]. Those lowly topics associated with the **lower** classes are to be championed by Bakhtin, while higher topics associated with upper classes are to be disparaged. The ascendancy of the higher canons of official life is to be resisted through celebrations **or** rather unleashings of the material bodily principle within everyday life. (p. 122)*



Roderick's interpretation of Bakhtin's approach to theorising carnival is to me far too polarised. On the other hand, that interpretation has the merit of identifying Bakhtin's and de Certeau's common interest in highlighting evidence of resistance of the marginalising strategies directed at less powerful groups, and their delight in portraying the rich heterogeneity of social life. This similarity helps also to justify my focus on consumption as an active process of challenging and potentially transforming provision of services that consumers consider insufficient or inappropriate.

Fourthly, a crucial similarity between Bakhtin and de Certeau was their common interest in 'boundaries' or 'margins'. Bakhtin (1975) insisted that cultural entities are effective boundaries:

*One must not, however, imagine the realm of culture as some sort of spatial whole, having boundaries but also having internal territory. **The** realm of culture **has** no internal territory; it is entirely distributed along the boundaries, boundaries pass everywhere, through its every aspect. . . . Every cultural act lives essentially on the boundaries: in this is its seriousness and significance; abstracted from boundaries it loses its soil, it becomes empty, arrogant, it degenerates and dies. (Cited in Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 51)*

This resonates with the extract from *The practice of everyday life* (1984) that I cited earlier:

*Marginality **is** today no longer limited to minority groups, but is rather massive and pervasive; this cultural activity of the non-producers of culture, an activity that is unsigned, unreadable and unsymbolised,*

*remains the only one possible **for** all those who nevertheless buy and pay **for** the showy products through which a productivist economy articulates itself. Marginality is becoming universal. A marginal group has **now** become a silent majority.* (p. xvii)

There are three principal points of similarity between these two statements. The first, which follows from my second point above, is that a rigid dichotomy between ‘centre’ and ‘margins’ is eschewed in favour of an acknowledgment that the dividing line is fluid and shifting. Additionally, margins are constructed **as** agential and productive, the sites of creativity for Bakhtin and of consumption for de Certeau. Furthermore, Bakhtin’s refusal to depict “*the realm of culture as **some** sort ~~of~~ spatial whole*” is in some ways evocative of de Certeau’s distinction between ‘place’ and ‘space’, in that he rejected a view of space **as** sequestered from the forces of everyday life. These three points of similarity have a three-fold significance for this thesis. The first significance **is** that they highlight Bakhtin’s and de Certeau’s agreement with each other on issues that are crucial for the thesis’s conceptual framework. The second significance is that they refocus attention on the ambivalent spaces of itinerancy, by suggesting that such spaces are dynamically and productively marginal. The third significance **is** to reassert the value of understanding itinerancy as dynamic and shifting, not as fixedly polarised between ‘unproblematic othering’ and ‘unproblematic celebration’.

A fifth point of commonality is highlighted by Holquist (1981), who identified in Bakhtin a tendency that **was** also characteristic of de Certeau, and that followed their common conviction that marginality *can* be creative and even powerful. This was the fact that Bakhtin **“is** *preoccupied by centuries*

*usually ignored by others; and within these, he has great affection for figures who are even more obscure*” (p. xvi). Holquist’s examples of this tendency in Bakhtin included his study of *“a peculiar school of grammarians at Toulouse in the seventh century A.D.”*, and his recurrent interest in *“the Carolingian Revival or the interstitial periods between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance”* (p. xvi). In de Certeau’s case, equivalent instances included his lifelong enthusiasm for the ideas of Jean-Joseph Sdrin, whom Ahearne (1995) described as *“a strange seventeenth-century mystic”* (p. 2), and de Certeau’s detailed account of a case of multiple diabolic possession in the French city of Loudon in 1632 (Ahearne, 1995, p. 76). This similarity of tendency underscores both Bakhtin’s and de Certeau’s greater interest in less well known individuals and groups than those with greater financial and cultural capital, a point that highlights the general applicability of their ideas to this study of a ‘marginalised’ group within Australian society.

Sixthly, Roderick’s (1995) depiction of Bakhtin’s account of the body contrasted strongly with Fiske’s (1989) construction of de Certeau’s account of the same topic. Roderick chastised Bakhtin for privileging the collective body of the public space – closely associated with carnival – over the individual body of the private sphere. For Bakhtin (1984), the grotesque public body is enormously productive and resilient, largely because of its direct link to the *“ancestral body of the people”* (p. 29).

By contrast, according to Fiske (1989), de Certeau believed *“that juridical law can be effective only if people have bodies upon which it can be imposed”* (p. 91). In Fiske’s analysis of de Certeau’s position on the body, *“This incarnation of the law and intextuation of the body. . . are also at work*

*in ordinary everyday practices*” such as “*clothing, cosmetics, slimming, [and] jogging*” (p. 91). What interests me in this analysis is the proposition that Bakhtin presented a more agential ‘reading’ of the body than that propounded by de Certeau. While ‘tactics of consumption’ are explicitly agential, my selection of ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ as accompanying conceptual resources derives from my argument that they provide an ultimately more productive interpretation of social life than ‘tactics of consumption’ considered in isolation from efforts to change and transform ‘the rules of the game’.

Seventhly and finally, Roderick (1995) levelled a similar feminist critique against Bakhtin to the criticism directed by Balides (1993) and McKay (1996) at de Certeau. Roderick’s attack was two-pronged. The first prong was his charge that Bakhtin’s study of carnival focussed largely on the construction of space from a masculinist perspective. Roderick summarised these two points in his acerbic comment: “*Bringing men into public space where they operate as competent speakers is hardly a radical new project*” (p. 132). The second prong was Roderick’s contention that Bakhtinian agency was also masculinist. This point related to Roderick’s assertion that “*Bakhtin is unable to recognise*” that the agency that he championed as being exercised by ‘the people’ was actually based on “*a sexed subject*” (p. 132). Again, I disagree with Roderick’s ‘reading’ of Bakhtin as excessively masculinist, on the basis that several successful feminist appropriations of Bakhtin’s ideas have been made (see for example Pearce [1994], who nevertheless also attacked Bakhtin as potentially masculinist).

This admittedly selective comparison of the thought of Bakhtin and de Certeau has revealed three main findings that are relevant to this thesis's conceptual framework. Firstly, a number of commentators revealed considerable ambivalence about certain ideas of both thinkers, an ambivalence that in some cases obscured or misrepresented their work. Secondly, Bakhtin and de Certeau's thought has several points of coincidence, particularly the recognition that they gave to human agency among 'marginalised' groups and the power of that agency in both contributing to, and resisting, that marginalisation. Thirdly, in relation to topics as varied as binary oppositions and the body, Bakhtin showed a willingness to consider how 'the rules of the game' separating groups with varying degrees of financial and cultural capital might be changed and transformed that was not so consistently displayed by de Certeau. In combination, these three findings endorse the 'rightness of fit' between my synthesis of these two thinkers' ideas and the logic of the study's conceptual framework, conceived as it is as simultaneously demonstrating that itinerancy is associated with marginalisation at the same time that it presents the possibilities of resistance and transformation.

### 3.3.2 'Outsidedness' and 'creative understanding'

Having traced some of the main lines of similarity and divergence between the thinking of Bakhtin and de Certeau, I ~~turn~~ now to examine the two Bakhtinian notions that I apply to the analysis of the study's data. My intention in this subsection is to outline the concepts as conceived by Bakhtin and understood by commentators on his work. I seek also to make a strong case that juxtaposing these concepts with de Certeau's 'tactics of consumption' is

necessary to explain how the show people can go beyond resisting marginalisation to transforming the origins and consequences of that marginalisation.

My inclusion of ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ in this study’s conceptual framework is neither accidental nor incidental. On the contrary, they have been included because they allow me to answer the third research question framing this thesis, the one relating to transformation, in ways that depending exclusively on de Certeau’s ‘tactics of consumption’ would not enable me to do. Such an exclusive dependence would create an intellectual problem, by not allowing the study to conceive of the possibility of the show people’s moving outside the marginalisation–resistance ‘loop’. Bakhtin’s notions are crucial to solving that intellectual problem, by conceptualising the potential for transformation and the creation of new ways of understanding itinerant people and Traveller education.

To elaborate this argument, in the next chapter I demonstrate how ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ are central to my methodological approach to the research design of the study. In this subsection of this chapter my task is to explain how those same notions contribute conceptually **as** well as methodologically. They do this by allowing me to identify and articulate those actions of the show people that cannot be explained by the broad concept of ‘tactics of consumption’. In other words, if I restricted the study’s conceptual framework to that broad concept, there are certain political moves and other actions that I would be unable to name and hence analyse, because ‘tactics of consumption’ cannot conceive of the kind of transformative practice that this thesis posits. Thus Bakhtin’s notions are indispensable

because they give me that naming power, and they allow me not only to focus on, highlight and identify, but also to acknowledge and analyse the political significance of, particular practices and moves.

Against the backdrop of this argument about the crucial analytical utility of the two Bakhtinian concepts of ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’, then, those two concepts are logically related. By this I mean that the processes entailed in ‘creative understanding’ are predicated on a preceding recognition of the ‘outsidedness’ of other people. In the analysis that follows in subsequent chapters, I shall demonstrate the ways that the show people display creative understanding **as** they contribute to the transformation of their educational opportunities. Here I need to explicate precisely what these terms mean.

Morson and Emerson (1990) explained ‘outsidedness’ in this way: “*When one person faces another, his [sic passim] experience **is** conditioned by his ‘outsidedness’. Even in the physical sense, one always sees something in the other that one does not see in oneself. I can see the world behind your back. . .*” (p. 53). Although the bases of ‘outsidedness’ could vary considerably, including “*personal, spatial, temporal, national, **or** any other*” (p. 56), “*outsidedness creates the possibility **of** dialogue, and dialogue helps to understand a culture in a profound way*” (p. 55).

Pechey (1997) referred to “*the early Bakhtin, who builds the whole house of value on the foundation **of** our ‘outsidedness’ to one another, my authorship of you **as** ‘hero’ and your answering authorship **of** me*” (p. 37). Pechey used that analysis to assert, “*We are each **of** us a margin and each **of** us a centre*” (p. 37), which recalls my earlier discussion of the similarities

between Bakhtin and de Certeau in their respective views of the ‘centre’ – ‘margins’ dichotomy. It recalls also Ferguson’s (1990) persuasive reference to ‘the invisible centre’, and his statement that “*When we say marginal, we must always ask marginal to, what?*” (p. 9). This link between ‘outsidedness’ and the idea of marginalisation as a floating signifier is important in suggesting ‘outsidedness’ as part of a process of destabilising the foundations of marginalisation. Again this highlights the analytical power of ‘outsidedness’: its contribution to that process of destabilisation is vital in identifying and interrogating actions by the show people that help to transport them to a new terrain that moves beyond the marginalisation–resistance interplay so ably theorised by de Certeau.

Morson and Emerson (1990) used a linguistic example to explain the operation of ‘outsidedness’:

*To realize and develop the potential of a language, ‘outsidedness’ – the outsidedness of another language – is required. That outsidedness may lead to an exchange in which each language reveals to the other what it did not know about itself, and in which new insights are produced that neither wholly contained before. (p. 310)*

In addition, Bakhtin (1986a) articulated the crucial role that ‘outsidedness’ played in enabling and promoting ‘creative understanding’:

*Creative understanding does not renounce itself, its own place in time, its own culture; and it forgets nothing. In order to understand, it is immensely important for the person who understands to be located outside the object of his or her creative understanding – in time, in space,*



*in culture. For one cannot even really see one's own exterior and comprehend it as a whole, and no mirrors or photographs can help; our real exterior can be seen and understood only by other people, because they are located outside us in space and because they are others. (p. 7; emphasis in original)*

Furthermore, “*Creative understanding continues creativity, and multiplies the artistic wealth of humanity*” (Bakhtin, 1986b, p. 142).

Morson and Emerson (1990) traced the elaboration of the Bakhtinian concept of ‘creative understanding’, which they argued was based on a “*profoundly non-Platonic conviction about human thought*” (p. 99):

*Revising the Kantian triad of his earliest period, Bakhtin now claims that understanding is in fact a four-tiered process: first, the physical perception, then its recognition, then a grasping of its significance in context, and finally—and this is the crucial step—‘active-dialogic understanding.’ This fourth step is more than an acknowledgment of existing context; it is implicitly creative, and presumes ever-new, and surprisingly new, contexts. (p. 99)*

The concept of ‘creative understanding’ is useful not only methodologically (as I elaborate in the next chapter) but also analytically, because it allows me to identify instances of the show people engaging in this kind of understanding. This in turn enables me to argue that these are fundamentally transformative acts that move the show people beyond their traditional marginalised status. Creative understanding, understood in this sense, is

something that one does, rather than something that one has or to which one aspires.

My proposition that ‘outsidedness’ is a prerequisite of ‘creative understanding’ is made despite my awareness that Morson and Emerson (1990) located ‘outsidedness’ as a new concept in what they identified as Bakhtin’s first period of intellectual development, and ‘creative understanding’ in his fourth and final period (p. 66). I am aware also that they argued that “*When he discovered dialogue, Bakhtin largely abandoned this model*” (p. 54) of social life that included ‘outsidedness’, on the basis that

*...the abstractness of the formulation, its sense of self and other as irreducibly counterposed starting points gave way to a richer sense of dialogue as the starting point. He arrived at more profound and integrated conceptions of self and society—two categories that were derivative, reified, and partially misleading when opposed to each other. (p. 54)*

Nevertheless, for me a less abstract and rigid conceptualisation of ‘outsidedness’ is helpful both in constructing my interactions with the Queensland show people and in interpreting their constructions of other people, as a prelude to engaging in dialogue as an expression of ‘creative understanding’. This argument is partly justified by the fact that Morson and Emerson asserted that “*Bakhtin tends to stress the importance of boundaries and of unmerged horizons, which provide the outsidedness that ultimately makes all dialogue and all creativity possible*” (p. 166), and by their subsequent statement that “*the differences of culture—the outsidedness—... makes [sic] a real dialogue among cultures and periods possible*” (p. 429;

emphasis in original). Even more explicitly, they claimed that Bakhtin's "understanding ~~of~~ creative understanding" contained four elements: "outsidedness, live entering, confusion, and active dialogue" (p. 99).

Perhaps the 'solution' to this apparent contradiction – at the very least an example of ambivalence by Morson and Emerson (1990) towards these two Bakhtinian concepts – lies in Emerson's (1984) contention, "*That one aspect of Bakhtin's style most inseparable from his personality is the developing idea. Its subtle shifts, redundancies, self-quotations – ultimately, its open-endedness – is [sic] the genre in which, and with which, he worked*" (p. xxxix).

In other words, rather than seeing 'outsidedness' from Bakhtin's first period and 'creative understanding' from his fourth period as mutually exclusive, it is more appropriate and productive to regard the latter as the considerably elaborated amplification of the former, with important continuities with, as well as crucial divergences from, the earlier concept. This approach echoes Docker's (1994) assertion that

*...there is no essential Bakhtin to be appropriated, that Bakhtin himself disliked any attention that tried to seek true or single identity ~~for~~ his writings, that he was embarrassed by agreement, and welcomed disagreement. Inevitably I have used "Bakhtin", my own interpretation ~~of~~ his writing, ~~for~~ my own arguments about cultural history.* (p. 183)

In a corresponding way, I am using two of Bakhtin's notions to support my argument about the show people's resistance and transformation of their marginalised situation.

So Morson and Emerson's (1990) ambivalence about the connections between Bakhtin's concepts of 'outsidedness' and 'creative understanding' has given way in my account to the argument that 'outsidedness' is a prerequisite of 'creative understanding', which in turn is a means of moving beyond the fixed conceptual binaries that constitute 'the rules of the game' through its contestation and destabilisation of the basis of those rules and its demonstration of the possibility of new and different rules being established in their place. Certainly if more equitable and less marginalising approaches to Traveller education are to be achieved, creatively and imaginatively comprehending the basis of the other's circumstances and positions is vital to communicating what each group expects such education to accomplish. Furthermore, as I relate in Chapter Four, these two concepts are crucial to justifying how it is possible for a non-itinerant person to write a thesis focussed on the lives of itinerant people, by employing and exploiting the principle of 'outsidedness', and also how such a thesis can itself reflect and promote 'creative understanding' between show people and non-show people.

Both these points – challenging conceptual binaries and helping to frame the study's research design – reinforce the argument pursued in this section of the chapter. That argument has been that a focus on de Certeau's 'tactics of consumption' is helpful in explaining how the show people experience and resist marginalisation, but that such a focus is insufficient to explain how such marginalisation can be and is transformed into more positive experiences and meanings associated with itinerancy. 'Outsidedness' emphasises the contingency and provisionality of the mutually opposed positions attached to marginalisation and resistance. Similarly, 'creative understanding', understood in an active and agential way to denote a conscious process and effort of will,

provides a means of moving beyond those mutually opposed positions to a comprehension of the other's point of view and a realisation that 'things don't always have to be like this'. This is the sense in which I conceive these two Bakhtinian concepts as underpinning a shift from marginalisation and resistance to transformation and a fundamental change to 'the rules of the game' according to which itinerancy is 'played' or enacted. That same shift is crucial to prosecuting a move beyond conceiving itinerancy as either 'unproblematic othering' or 'unproblematic celebration' towards a far more mobile, realistic and respectful understanding of itinerant people.

### **3.4 Synthesis of the conceptual framework**

The purpose of this section of the chapter is to synthesise the main elements of the study's conceptual framework, thereby summarising the argument outlined so far in this thesis and providing a 'bridge' to the research design and data analysis chapters that follow. Figure 3.1 portrays the thesis's conceptual framework in diagrammatic form.


ITEMS	ELEMENTS
Focus	The spaces of itinerancy
Key concepts	‘Tactics of consumption’ ↔ ‘Outsidedness’ ↔ ‘Creative understanding’ 
Research questions	Marginal-isation ↔ Resist-ance ↔ Trans-formation
Literature	Australian shows ↔ Traveller education

Figure 3.1: The conceptual framework of the study

The starting point of the conceptual framework, which as I noted at the outset of the chapter is integrally associated with the need to pursue an anti-essentialist construction of itinerancy, is the study’s focus: the spaces of itinerancy. I explained earlier that ‘spaces’ in this context refers to the physical and symbolic spaces through which itinerants travel, which are therefore recognisably different from the spaces in which non-itinerants conduct their daily lives.

The thesis’s focus on the spaces of itinerancy has prompted my selection of the three key concepts informing this study. Firstly, de Certeau’s concept of ‘tactics of consumption’ is crucial to explaining how and why the show people resist and subvert their marginalised status, as a means of maximising

their children's educational access and in the process of turning the often uncomprehending and sometimes hostile 'spaces' through which they travel into 'places' of their own. On the other hand, my ambivalence about de Certeau's concept led me to argue that, although I found many of the binary oppositions ascribed to him by other writers (and about which they expressed their own ambivalence) misconceived, that concept did not enable an analysis of a situation in which 'the rules of the game' that construct people like the 'showies' as marginalised can actually change.

Accordingly, I selected Bakhtin's notions of 'outsidedness' and 'creative understanding' as a means of understanding how 'the rules of the game' can and do change, thereby capitalising on the potential resistance and transformation of the spaces of itinerancy and therefore refusing to privilege marginalisation as the single most influential consequence of itinerancy. 'Outsidedness' as a prerequisite of 'creative understanding', in my 'reading', explains how the show people's interactions with others, including educational providers, can enable a mutually respectful comprehension to develop. This growing comprehension would have the effect of making the 'spaces' of itinerancy 'places' for both groups, rather than a territory that the itinerants would occupy only when the non-itinerants were not looking.

In combination, the focus on the spaces of itinerancy and the key concepts of 'tactics of consumption', 'outsidedness' and 'creative understanding' explain, inform and refine the three research questions underpinning this thesis. Firstly, the show people's experiences of marginalisation result directly from the constructions of the spaces of itinerancy as 'unstable' and even 'dangerous' places where the established order is turned upside down.

In consequence, ‘strategies of marginalisation’ are experienced by the show people, who epitomise these perceived ‘threats’ to that order. This situation is clearly the antithesis of the exercise of ‘outsidedness’ in order to reach mutual ‘creative understanding’.

Secondly, that same instability and fluidity of the spaces of itinerancy give the show people opportunities to take subversive action and engage in several and varied ‘tactics of consumption’ in order to resist their marginalisation. Here the focus is on ‘outsidedness’ rather than ‘creative understanding’, as the show people draw strength for their resistant tactics from what makes them different from, or ‘outside’, the established order. So ‘outsidedness’ becomes transformative and an explicitly political move.

Thirdly, in an attempt to move beyond ‘the rules of the game’ that position ‘tactics of consumption’ in opposition to ‘strategies of marginalisation’, the show people also engage in actions designed to capitalise on their ‘outsidedness’ in relation to non-itinerant people, and to enhance and maximise mutual ‘creative understanding’, which thereby and also becomes a political move against those who set ‘the rules of the game’. They see these actions as the most likely to enable them to move beyond marginalisation and resistance to transformation, and to make the often hostile ‘spaces’ of itinerancy into meaningful and welcoming ‘places’ of their own.

Finally, it is intended that the data analysis chapters of this thesis, having explored marginalisation, resistance and transformation in relation to the Queensland show people, will contribute significantly to extending the existing literature about Australian shows and Traveller education. In particular, it is intended that the thesis function as a counternarrative to the



negative stereotypes still prevalent in that literature, and instead contribute to circulating more accurate and productive understandings of show people and their educational experiences and opportunities.

To reiterate and summarise, then, the synthesised conceptual framework underpinning this thesis uses ‘tactics of consumption’, ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ as analytical lenses to interpret the Queensland show people’s experiences of marginalisation, resistance and transformation as they move through the spaces of their itinerancy. Those experiences can either inhibit the ‘spaces’ of itinerancy from becoming mutually valued ‘places’ of living and learning, or else they can facilitate that process of transformative becoming. Examples of such facilitation can contribute significantly to making the literatures on Australian shows and Traveller education more rather than less meaningful and productive for educational providers and their varied clients – and of course show people themselves. Equally significantly, these analytical tools are central to the goal of pursuing a counternarrative to the traditional and limited understandings of itinerancy and Traveller education evident in much of the current literature.

### **3.5 Review of the chapter**

In his essay “*Travelling cultures*” (1992), the anthropologist James Clifford referred to

*. . .the evident fact that travellers move about under strong cultural, political, and economic compulsions and that certain travellers are materially privileged, others oppressed. . . .Travel, in this view, denotes a range of material, spatial practices that produce knowledge, stories, traditions, comportments, musics, books, diaries, and other cultural expressions. (p. 108)*

Clifford also outlined the concept of “*dwelling-in-travel*”(p. 102), whereby travellers develop routines and rhythms of tradition and culture that appear to belie the transience stereotypically associated with the status of traveller.

Clifford’s identification of the “*strong cultural, political, and economic compulsions*” motivating travellers and the “*range of material, spatial practices*” associated with travel, and his reference to “*dwelling-in-travel*”, are a convenient way of reviewing this chapter by returning to its starting point. I began the chapter by proposing, on the basis of the preceding literature review, the need to avoid the twin conceptual ‘dead ends’ of ‘unproblematic othering’ and ‘unproblematic celebration’, and also that itinerancy involves distinctive relationships between people and space, a unifying theme that linked the disparate sections of which this chapter is composed.

I began by outlining my justification for applying de Certeau’s (1984, 1986) concept of ‘tactics of consumption’ to this study. In particular, I asserted the potential value of analysing the show people’s actions as examples of their exercise of agency in the form of ‘tactics of consumption’ intended to make the marginalised ‘spaces’ of itinerancy into ‘places’ that they would find meaningful and productive. At the same time, I noted the

considerable ambivalence with which commentators have responded to one or other of his so-called ‘binary oppositions’, arguing that many of these critiques are misconceived on the basis of appealing to the empirical setting of the show people. On the other hand, I expressed my own ambivalence about de Certeau, particularly my concern about the evident incapacity of ‘tactics of consumption’ to turn ‘spaces’ into ‘places’ on other than a temporary basis.

This apparent inability to change ‘the rules of the game’ justified my adoption of elements of Bakhtin’s thought into the study’s conceptual framework. Specifically, I contended that ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’ (Bakhtin, 1986a) provide a way of theorising how the show people move beyond marginalisation and resistance into transformation of their experiences of itinerancy, making possible more enduring – although no less contingent and provisional – ‘places’ for them to occupy as their ***"dwelling-in-travel"*** (Clifford, 1992, p. 102).

Finally, I essayed a synthesis of this thesis’s conceptual framework. I reiterated my focus on the spaces of itinerancy, and my interest in the consequent marginalisation, resistance and transformation of those spaces. I proposed that ‘tactics of consumption’, ‘outsidedness’ and ‘creative understanding’, reflecting different **aspects** of that marginalisation, resistance and transformation, were appropriate lenses for analysing the show people’s educational experiences. Analysing the show people’s lives in this way, I argued, would have significant implications for extending, and for functioning as a counternarrative to, the existing literature on Australian shows and Traveller education.

This chapter has therefore used the preceding literature review as the basis for elaborating a conceptual framework to analyse the data collected in this study, a framework whose logic is framed and nurtured by avoiding an essentialist approach to understanding itinerancy. I turn now to consider the research design underpinning the collection and analysis of those data, which are centred on communicating my understanding of ‘learning on the run’ for the Queensland show children and their families.