Evolutions in Class Visibility, Morality, and Representation in Chilean Teleseries: From Military Regime to Current Moment

Sadie Smeck
Washington University in St Louis

Follow this and additional works at: https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/undergrad_open

Part of the Latin American Studies Commons

Recommended Citation

This Dissertation/Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Washington University Open Scholarship. It has been accepted for inclusion in Undergraduate Theses—Unrestricted by an authorized administrator of Washington University Open Scholarship. For more information, please contact digital@wumail.wustl.edu.
Evolutions in class visibility, morality and representation in Chilean teleseries:

From military regime to current moment

Sadie Smeck
ABSTRACT

This work begins by exploring the concepts of class and class-consciousness as they are represented in the Chilean teleserie, *Pobre Rico* (2012-13), examining elements of class-marked aesthetics, linguistics and spaces in Santiago as these are manifested in the television program. The work will question how these representations relate to national, urban realities, and problematize the manner in which they at times reflect, exaggerate and/or misrepresent particular attitudes, dynamics and realities of class stratification in present-day, urban Chilean society. The work then examines how representations of class in Chilean television and media have evolved in the past three decades, since the final years of General Augusto Pinochet’s military regime (1973-1990). This study progresses through three “phases” of teleseries, from the end of the military regime through two decades of democratic transition, examining a parallel transition and thematic opening with respect to class representation in fictional television shows. All programs analyzed in this study aired on Chile’s national network, TVN, which underwent congressionally mandated reform following the end of the dictatorship.

INTRODUCTION

In the second half of the twentieth century, the telenovela, or soap opera, became one of the most commercially successful industries worldwide, and arguably among the most influential forms of media in Latin America. In Chile, over 95 percent of homes have a television, and for a majority of citizens, the television serves as the main, or even exclusive, source of cultural consumption, factual information and entertainment (Subercaseaux 2006). The influence of the telenovela has historically functioned not only
on a political or administrative level, with leaders censoring or sponsoring transmissions of certain messages and discourses via the widely viewed medium, but also on a social and cultural level, in the formation of what Benedict Anderson (1983) called “imagined communities” and a sense of collective or shared identity. Telenovelas typically air five days a week for an hour during prime time, with around 150-250 total episodes per season. A 2003 documentary released by Films for the Humanities and Science, *Telenovelas: Love, TV and Power*, calls fictional television the “machine that manufactures and churns out the dreams of a society,” molding its collective consciousness.

In Chile, the various industries of cultural production have undergone significant changes since the early 1990s. The end of General Augusto Pinochet’s 17-year-long military rule and the return to democratic governance in 1989 marked the beginning of a new political era known as La Concertación, or “the agreement.” The presidencies of the country’s three successive leaders, Patricio Aylwin (1990-1994), Eduardo Frei (1994-2000) and Ricardo Lagos (2000-2006), were characterized by attempts, with varied degrees of success, to differentiate their leadership from the government and political climate under Pinochet. One of the deepest and most lasting effects of the Pinochet regime was the manner in which its restrictive dominion over the public sphere fundamentally shaped cultural production. The neoliberal economic policies of the general’s administration opened free trade with other nations, stressing free market Capitalism in order to grow the domestic economy and fortify modernization efforts. While successful in furthering the nation’s development and net economic growth, the neoliberal policies favored the wealthy and privileged few, dramatically widening the gap
between the city’s wealthy and poor. The military coup not only disenfranchised much of the middle and lower class workforce, but the State’s focus on fostering international relationships and national commercial success, growth and surplus tended to ignore and exclude these groups from many aspects of social and cultural life in Chile.

In addition to its strict neoliberal policies, the Pinochet regime was marked by sometimes-violent strictures on free speech and cultural expression. Subercaseaux highlights three dominant discourses of the Pinochet regime whose effects on Chilean culture and society were so deeply rooted during the period that they continue to shape much of Chilean cultural expression today: authoritarian nationalism, spiritual fundamentalism (traditional Catholicism and Opus Dei) and strict neoliberalism (2006). He argues that a narrow focus on privileged subsets of Chilean society as representative of national collectivity and idiosyncrasy hindered and conflicted with the production and expression of a plurality of cultural forms and identities within the nation, including indigenous peoples, immigrants and other minorities. Networks controlled by both government entities and private companies favored elitist storylines and themes, excluding many groups more representative of the majority’s national reality. The predominant goal of creating a strong national identity and social body came at the expense of representing the nation’s “plurality,” creating an environment in which the formation of stereotypes and national archetypes was all but encouraged. Under the Pinochet regime, Subercaseaux argues, culture became an “exchangeable good,” active within and responsive to the global marketplace. In many respects, the focus of cultural productions from art to film, on a national scale, shifted from cultural expression and other humanistic aims (as in the previous administrations of Presidents Frei, Montalva and
Allende) to stark efficiency and economic value. This was especially clear in mass-produced culture industries, like film and television, where explicit censorship of themes and content took place during the dictatorship, a period sometimes referred to as a “cultural blackout” (Subercaseaux 2006, p. 2).

With political changes post-dictatorship, simultaneous economic, social and cultural changes within the society became increasingly apparent in forms of expression within the channels of cultural mass-production. The reduction or elimination of the systems of control and fear that had dominated under the dictatorship allowed a thematic opening in the cultural sphere. Many artists and intellectuals, who were exiled either forcibly or electively during the dictatorship, began reentering the country, and their work often included a response to the experience of exile or the military regime. While most television shows retained a largely nationalist bent, they began to introduce topics dealing with social realities that, under the dictatorship, would have been dangerous to discuss or subject to censorship on television. The transformation was, of course, neither immediate nor complete. Though tolerance and liberty in cultural productions and the media have increased, television shows remain very much influenced by the logic and incentives of conservatism and the market, where every aspect of content, style and form is driven by the goal of high ratings and viewership. Despite post-dictatorship efforts toward reconciliation and discussion of the injustices, such as the Comisión Nacional de Verdad y Reconciliación, or “Rettig Report,” released in 1991 under President Aylwin, and the National Commission on Political Imprisonment and Torture, or “Valech Report,” released in 2004 under President Lagos, certain social and political topics remain controversial or taboo (2006). For example, specific mentions of the dictatorship,
including the tortures, murders, disappearances and other human rights violations that took place under the Pinochet regime are largely avoided, as are political parties and movements, with certain exceptions, as this work will later explore.

Chilean telenovelas have also undergone significant transformation with regards to the issue of class. Under the leadership of Pinochet, Chile’s national channel, Televisión Nacional de Chile (TVN), was subjected to censorship and content control, both in its news coverage and fictional television shows. Jofré argues that the nation’s “macrocircuits” of communication were contaminated by the pervasive, forced discourse of the military regime, with its focus on the logic of the market and exclusion of wide social sectors, and that this focus created a divide between a supposed “elite culture” and the “popular” cultural forms (1989). The state used not only its strategic political control, but also its purchasing power to fund propaganda campaigns in support of the military government, communicating to the masses a supportive message of the authoritarian regime. Through these campaigns, the state portrayed itself as a “protagonist in the process of community development,” “recreating” communications to promote a stronger connection to the viewing, listening and reading public (1989, p. 86).

Televisión Nacional de Chile began broadcasting in 1969, and aired its first telenovela, *Amelia*, in 1981. In 1990, Congress mandated a reform of TVN and CNTV, which had become irresponsibly managed and corrupt under the military regime. Law No. 19.132, passed in March of 1992, revised the “mission” of the national channel; TVN would be committed to serving the public, not only the societal elites, exhibiting “pluralismo y objetividad en toda su programación” (Corro et. al. 2009, p. 64). In response, the channel introduced a greater diversity of characters into its programs and
teleseries, exploring both identities and topics that had been restricted during the military regime’s strict media censorship. A general shift from melodrama to comedy aided in softening this topical transition, allowing space for new ideas, characters and plotlines with less gravitas or potential for controversy. The focus of much of the channel’s coverage and fictional productions was turned inward; if not explicitly critical, at least “self-reflective” (Corro et. al. 2009, p. 70). By 1993, TVN became a legitimate competitor of the nation’s other leading network, Canal 13, surpassing the rival channel’s teleseries average ratings that year. A higher degree of focus was placed upon approaching a more accurate depiction of a realistic national portrait and commentary, dealing with issues like discrimination and the plurality of identities within the country, in relation to gender, political position, social class and other factors (Corro et. al. 2009).

In this work, I will first present TVN’s most recent teleserie, airing on the national channel since April 2012, to illustrate certain features of Chilean consciousness and cultural representation of class in the present moment, examining aesthetic, linguistic and spatial distinctions in urban settings, and their underlying social and moral implications. I have chosen to focus on solely the teleseries of TVN, the state-owned national television channel that underwent congressionally legislated reforms during the early transition period for the purposes of consistency and clarity of the relation between changes in the political state and one form of cultural production over which it has historically exercised power and control, the teleserie. I will then present three general phases in the evolution of the national channel’s teleseries since the military regime, beginning with the final years of the dictatorship and period before the national channel’s reform in 1992. During this period, the genre was marked by an absence of any legitimate attempt to represent
the lower or “popular” classes of Chilean society, apparent in programs like *La Dama del Balcón* (1985), *Mi Nombre Es Lara* (1987) and *El Milagro de Vivir* (1990), in which the focus of the story is placed almost entirely upon elite social actors and scenarios, excluding pluralist identities, narratives and social experiences. The second phase, I will argue, is characterized by the national channel’s initial efforts to democratize its fictional content, during which members of the lower or “popular” classes appear in the programs, but are represented in a reductionary manner, reinforcing stereotypes of delinquency and dishonesty among the underprivileged masses. I will discuss *Trampas y Caretas* (1992) and *Jaque Mate* (1993) to illustrate this phase, as well as an exceptional case, *Volver a Empezar* (1991), the first series to air after the end of Pinochet’s regime and a precursor to the 1992 mandated reform of TVN. Finally, I will argue the existence of a final phase, in which the narrative of the “popular” masses becomes exalted and valorized, while corruption and backwardness among members of the elite socioeconomic classes are exaggerated. In contrast to the second phase, delinquency among characters of lower socioeconomic status becomes the exception, whereas deception and disfunction among the elites is portrayed as the norm. The shows *Amores de Mercado* (2001) and *Puertas Adentro* (2003) will be analyzed to represent this phase. The study will conclude with reflections on thematic evolutions within *Pobre Rico* (2012-13) and its socio-political content.

**CHAPTER ONE: Present-day class realities and fictions represented in *Pobre Rico***

*Pobre Rico* began airing five days a week during the evening television primetime, 8 p.m., on April 23, 2012. In its first week, the show’s ratings quickly rose
and it became the nation’s most-watched show by the end of the week, rated at 33.8 points (El Mercurio, April 28 2012). The show’s basic premise is familiar and simple: two baby boys are switched at birth in a Santiago hospital; one, Nicolás, is sent to the extremely wealthy Cotapos family, while the other, Freddy, is sent home with the working class Rivas family. Seventeen years later, when a betrayal by Nicolás’ mother, Virginia Cotapos, with the best friend of Don Máximo Cotapos, her husband, is brought to light, the paternity of Nicolás is called into question and genetically tested. The results of the test show that neither Virginia nor Máximo are Nicolás’ biological parents, and a search of hospital records identifies Eloísa Rivas, a single, working-class mother, as the family with whom the Cotapos infant had been mistaken. Due to the high profile of the wealthy Cotapos family within Chile, the switch becomes a national news scandal. Shortly thereafter, a judge rules that each of the sons be returned to his biological family for a period, forcing the boys to uproot and switch families. Throughout the series, this situation reveals prejudices in both families, which, while theatrically exaggerated, often reflect commonly held attitudes with regard to social class and related discourses of morality in modern Chilean society, along with their political and cultural underpinnings.

_Pobre Rico_ puts on display the extreme degree to which socioeconomic class is a conscious, omnipresent and powerful influence on present-day social interactions in Chile, especially in its sprawling metropolitan capital, Santiago. In line with the teleserie’s foundational plot and theme of class distinction, many aesthetic and audiovisual aspects of the teleserie underscore polarization among social classes by exaggerating stark differences between groups of characters in the series. The Cotapos family, in which Nicolás was raised, is one of the most wealthy and influential in
Santiago. The patriarch, Don Máximo, is a highly successful and respected businessman, the fictional CEO of an actual Chilean enterprise called Copec, an energy and forestry company with a line of gas stations throughout the country. The Cotapos family’s grandiose home and extravagant lifestyle embody the height of luxury and excess. The mansion, situated in an exclusive residential community in the prestigious northeastern outskirts of Santiago (later explicitly identified as an actual comuna called “La Dehesa”), is impeccably decorated and maintained by a full staff. A live-in “nana,” Sonia, who cares for the children and cleans the home, further accentuates the opulence and idleness of the Cotapos family, especially that of Virginia, the matriarch. By contrast, the Rivas family, where Freddy Peréz is raised, purports to represent a typical working class family in Chile, where the matriarch, Eloísa, is a hardworking single mother employed in the convenience store attached to a Copec station. Their home in a densely populated central comuna is humble, decorated traditionally and centered on a small kitchen and living room. When Nicolás moves in with his biological family, he shares a small, cramped bedroom and bunk bed with his younger sister, Megan. In contrast to the Cotapos family meals with a menu and full wait staff, the Rivas are shown in early episodes dining on “completos” and “as,” or hotdogs sold from a street vendor’s cart. The Rivas home is constantly filled with visiting friends and neighbors, a far cry from the secluded and highly private Cotapos family residence.

Two contrasting archetypes established in the teleserie reflect the baseline popular social classifications (stratifications) within Chilean society in the present moment: the figures of the “cuico” and “flaite.” The dichotomy of these archetypes represents one of the defining features of Chilean class-consciousness today; as simplified, standardized
labels, they are easily identified and assigned. *Mainframe Diccionario de Modismos Chilenos*, a website that compiles multiple definitions of Chilean slang terms based on free and open postings by the public, defines the term “cuico,” with words and phrases like “wealthy,” “high class,” “behaves like a noble,” “right-wing,” and “exclusive neighborhood.” Definitions of “flaite” (alternately spelled “flayte”) found on Mainframe are marked by descriptions of physical appearance and “rapero” identity (baggy pants, thick gold chains), relegation to the western zone of the city, delinquency, marginality and a low level of education. In *Chilenismos Dictionary and Phrasebook*, Daniel Joelson defines “cuico” as a noun or adjective: “yuppy, wealthy and arrogant person,” and flaite, also a noun or adjective as “vulgar, coarse” (2005). As I will argue, particular aesthetics, speaking styles, and positioning within the actual social and physical cartography of the city of Santiago mark both the “flaite” and “cuico” identities found in the teleserie *Pobre Rico*. However, these terms are relatively new to the Chilean slang vernacular. The *Diccionario Ejemplificado de Chilenismos*, published in 1985 by the Academia Superior de Ciencias Pedagógicas, suggests that the original term “cuico” did not yet have a direct relation to class. Under the category of “Coa,” the invented slang dialect among delinquent and lower class members of Chilean society, the term “cuico” means: “Que no sabe o no tiene dominio o habilidad en cierta cosa,” not signifying wealth, but rather impotence (ASCP 1985, p. 1519). The term “flaite” does not appear in the volume.

In post-transition television shows like *Pobre Rico*, these distinctive aesthetics are very present, but are only a part of the discourse of the different social classes, which also places some emphasis on political post-dictatorship topics such as the failings and shortcomings of the Capitalist State. In *Pobre Rico*, the concerns are addressed in a
relatively significant way, principally through the character of Freddy who, raised in a low-income barrio, has the apparent, outward contempt for the nation’s upper classes and corporate giants associated with the “flaite” identity. In the pilot episode, on a visit to Don Máximo’s office building, he spray paints a crossed-out dollar sign on a piece of art hanging in the lobby. Later in that episode, he listens to the song “La maquinita,” by the leftist Chilean musical group, Juana Fé, whose lyrics decry the pursuit of material success (“La plata no vale nada!”). Freddy’s leftist political ideology is further reflected in the presence of Che Guevara iconography among his belongings, printed on several of his t-shirts and posters. Freddy dresses informally in the initial episodes of the show, wearing baggy pants, cut-off sleeveless t-shirts and loose-fitting sneakers similar to the knock-off Nike “Flighters” from which the term “flaite” is theorized to have been derived. In Episode Two, Freddy says he prefers his own “pinchas” to the expensive “ropa cuica” that the Cotapos family offers when he moves into their home. His character complicates the dynamic of the happy, ignorant and simplistic poor person seen in earlier iterations of the Chilean teleserie, and shows that he values the barrio where he was raised not because of it’s idyllic simplicity, but because of the mutual struggle, structural violence, and exploitation that have unified him with his friends there.

The show establishes a dichotomy and tension between the two families, not only socio-economically, but also morally. Freddy proudly resists assimilation into the extravagant lifestyle of the Cotapos family and makes an effort to reject the material comforts and excesses he experiences there. As he begins to work at the office with Don Máximo in Episode 14, Freddy resists assimilating into the “cuico culture,” or even wearing a suit, and discounts the notion that he might have “un buen ojo para negocios.”
By contrast, as Nicolás adjusts to his life in the barrio quickly, expressing contempt for his father, Máximo, whom he says ignores him and only cares about money and his work, and refuses to go home with his mother when she comes to collect him in violation of the judge’s decree. He is embraced by the open and caring Rivas family, and begins to bond quickly with Megan, his biological younger sister. Shortly after the move, for the course of one episode, Nicolás temporarily develops, with Megan’s help, an alternate “flaite” personality, attempting to assimilate into the barrio culture and performing social class by dressing, speaking and acting based on his perceptions of the “flaite” archetype.

The discourse of superior moral standards among the lower classes has another aesthetic manifestation in the series through the general beautification and idealization of the lower class Rivas family and the barrio in which they reside. Despite the family’s supposed state of “poverty,” Eloísas appears made-up, well dressed and healthy in each episode. Her physical attractiveness and high moral standards combine to form a major sub-plot early in the series, as Don Máximo expresses his adulterous interest in her and, though tempted, she resists his advances, praying to God for help in doing so. While religion played a more significant role, as this work will explore, in the discourses of class and morality in earlier teleseries on the national network, the discursive role of religion in Pobre Rico is relatively limited, a trend attributable to marked secularization and progression away from strict, traditional religious values in post-dictatorship Chile.

One of the strongest apparent discourses of moral division among social classes can be seen in the juxtaposition of Virginia Cotapos and Eloísas Rivas. The conflict of the series’ pilot episode is founded in Virginia’s bitter sexual betrayal of Don Máximo with his best friend, and throughout the show, Virginia’s idleness, jealousy and quick temper
are emphasized, while Eloísa’s virtue and generosity are simultaneously highlighted. While Virginia cruelly and coldly rejects Freddy as her son, Eloísa embraces Nicolás with genuine care, acknowledging the difficulty of his transition and making an effort to show him “el lado bonito” of life in the barrio. Perpetual energy and an upbeat attitude define Eloísa’s character, while an almost clinical eccentricity, judgmentalism and consistent malice characterize Virginia’s disposition. While Virginia coddles and defends her son endlessly, Eloísa is warm, but pragmatic with Nicolás, holding him accountable to basic standards of reliability as he begins to work with her at the Copec station. Throughout the show, the juxtaposition of the wealthy class’ immorality and idleness with the working class’ virtue and strong work ethic remains significant. Of course, exceptions and complications to this simplified dichotomy can be found in characters and scenarios throughout the series, such as Nicolás’ biological father, Juan Carlos, a mischievous and manipulative homeless man who works for donations of tips, sweeping around the graves in the Cementerio General, and Alex Garrido, a generous and upstanding millionaire who befriends and proposes marriage to Eloisa later in the series.

As in most cultures around the world, speaking style is one of the greatest perceived indicators of social class distinction in Chile. Certain deviations from the “standard” form of speaking often hint at several things about a person, among them gender, education, socioeconomic status and age. However, a study of linguistic forms that does not take into account the influence of situational factors on speech, such as setting, style (ie. careful versus casual), emotion and topic of conversation, can lead to a reductionist analysis of its manifestations in a society (Medina-Rivera 2011). Speaking styles present in Pobre Rico, for example, cannot be simply categorized into upper and
lower class forms, “cuico” and “flaite” forms, but rather with attention to situational considerations. This analysis will begin with an explanation of standard and deviated linguistic forms before going on to explore complexities within the Chilean linguistic landscape.

Chilean Spanish pronunciation, at all levels of society, is marked by particular tendencies of deletion, shortening, and alteration of letters and words. In casual settings, deviation from the standard form of speaking occurs in several ways, such as (s)-deletion, where, for instance, the word “más” is pronounced “má.” This deviation is also found in contexts throughout South America; Medina-Riveras’ study of this linguistic deviation in Cartagenas, for example, showed a reduction of 30-40 percent in the incidence of (s)-deletion when citizens of all classes were asked to read words from a list compared with the measurement of their (s)-deletion tendencies in an informal setting. Though the deletion occurred in most cases regardless of social class, its incidence was higher among lower and lower-middle income citizens in both formal and informal settings. Deletion of the letter “/d/” is also common in informal or lower class situations, where, for example, the word “nada” becomes “na’a,” or “hablado” becomes “habla’o.” Bentivoglio and Sedano also distinguish a related deviation of the preposition “para” and its abbreviated form (with /r/-deletion) “pa’a” as a particular case. While the abbreviated variation of the preposition is commonly cited as an indication of the speaker’s low socioeconomic level, the linguists found in a study that even upper income, educated individuals abbreviated to “pa’a” in informal settings in which they are speaking rapidly (2011).

Informal Chilean Spanish is also highly marked by the presence of the diminutive form (“ito/ita”), attached to words as a means of conveying affection, softening a
command, or expressing immediacy (ie. “ahorita”). Though this tendency can be seen at all levels of Chilean society, it is used most frequently in the speech of individuals with low income and/or education levels. In the series, Eloisa is the character that most frequently employs the diminutive form, suggesting that this deviation from the standard speaking style is a more significant indicator of social class identification than either of the deletion forms [(s) or /d/]. Another class-marked deviation from the standard, the shortening and alteration of the informal “tu” verb form can be found at all levels of society in informal situations. Phrases like “me llamis” and “¿que queri?,” where “tú” form verb endings have been shortened, changed and/or accompanied by a deletion, are a deviation marked much more strongly by age (youth) than by class or gender, as the series reflects. Eloisa and other adult characters in the barrio use the altered informal verb form, reflecting lower social class identification. Another deviation that seems to occur almost exclusively among lower social class speakers or in ultra-informal settings is the use of the pronoun “vos” in place of the pronoun “tú.” In Chile’s lower classes, the “vos” form is used as an exaggerated form of the informal, inconsistently employed among informal conversational partners, and followed by either the standard or shortened “tú” form of the verb (ie. “¿Que queri vos que yo haga?”).

Chile is known throughout the Spanish-speaking world for its prolific slang vocabulary. Some of the particularly Chilean slang forms can be found across social classes and in a wide spectrum of situations in Chile, especially the nation’s urban center, Santiago. The shortened form of “pues,” or “po,” is one example; as perhaps the most omnipresent Chilean slang form, the word “po” is characterized by its versatility and frequent presence in daily conversation. Though it is used in informal settings, and to
some degree connotes a distinction of class when used in more formal situations or conversations, the abbreviation maintains a strong presence in the speech of Chilean citizens at all levels. Certain slang vocabulary and speaking forms in Chilean Spanish, however, are highly marked by class distinction. These forms are used in the series’ scripted dialogue to accentuate social class distinctions among characters whose often rather slight aesthetic distinction might distract from the show’s thematic aim to portray class-related polarities. Characters like Freddy, his girlfriend from the barrio, Claudia, and his best friend, Rodrigo, use these forms most frequently in the show, representing the particular dialect and socially codified forms of speaking among youth of the lower classes, including, but not limited to, the “flaite” identity. In episode two, Claudia extols the expensive shoes, or “zapatillas,” that the Cotapos family has given to Freddy. “Son terrible de caras!” she says. “Son pulentas!” Many of the slang terms or shortened forms to express appreciation or approval (ie. “-ueno,” “pulento,” “bakan”) are strong markers of informality among youth, and of low social class among adult speakers. Further, phrases like “terrible de” to signify “muy” and “flor flai” to signify “todo excelente” are highly class-marked and stigmatized outside of communities of low socioeconomic status. It is important to note, however, that these forms result in not only distinction from mainstream culture and higher classes of society, but also socially significant inclusion and notions of loyalty to lower-class social circles and residential communities.

According to the argument of sociolinguist Niño-Murcia, linguistic characteristics are a highly important identity marker, and the use of established linguistic norms within these communities can demonstrate identification with and loyalty to a particular social group, both at the upper and lower levels of a society (2011).
The names of the characters in the series also reflect similar demarcations of class in Chilean society. According to theatre and literature professor Cristián Opazo of the Pontificia Universidad Católica, names in Chilean society often reflect socioeconomic class in significant general patterns (lecture April 2012). A Hispanic first and last name, like Nicolás Cotapos, has ambiguous class connotations, with potential placement in a higher or lower stratum. A Hispanic first name and Anglo/European last name, meanwhile, usually connotes a higher social status, based on a culturally valued European lineage. By contrast, an Anglo first name paired with a Hispanic last name is a strong indicator of lower social class rank. The Mainframe Diccionario de Modismos Chilenos features a list called “Flaite (nombres de mujer),” which includes the following: Kimberly, Brittany, Yessica “(con y),” Sharon, Janet, Yosselin, Cathy, Maybelline, Hellen, Samantha and Marilin. In the series, Freddy Pérez and his younger sister, Megan, exemplify this social reality. When Freddy comes to live with the Cotapos family in episode one, Máximo Cotapos expresses to his wife his distaste for the name “Freddy” and resolves that the name must be legally changed to “Alfredo” so as not to embarrass the family. Cotapos addresses his biological son only by his new name, which confuses Freddy and upsets his mother, Eloísa Rivas.

In Chile’s capital city, the subject of social class is far from taboo, and derogatory terms exist on both extremes of the socioeconomic spectrum. The apparent consciousness of class distinction in Chilean society is made explicit in the series through various conversations among characters that directly address class difference. Characters like Julieta (daughter of los Cotapos), Martina (Nicolás’ supermodel girlfriend) and Virginia, for example, exaggerate attitudes of class separatism in initial conversations with Freddy;
each addresses him directly about the social class disparity between the highly reduced and simplified “upper” and “lower” classes, almost as if these distinctions were biologically determined. Julieta’s conversation with Freddy in Episode Four reveals her fierce prejudice when she says in a biting tone, “Hermano biológico, pero hermano de clase nunca.” Martina, enraged when Freddy spontaneously kisses her in Episode Three, calls him “desubicado” and yells, “Flaite! No tengo nada que ver contigo! Somos de otra clase!” In episode one, Virginia worries aloud in as she reads the newspaper where Nicolás is pictured on the front page, working in uniform at the Copec station, “Por ser marginal, la sociedad lo va a rechazar!” The show simplifies the socioeconomic divide to its extremes, without a marked effort to represent the middle class, erasing many of the complexities implicit in class definitions (Medina-Rivera 2011).

Santiago is a sprawling city of vast inequality and stark segregation. Within its system of thirty-two “comunas,” or small administrative municipalities, divisions of socioeconomic status are overwhelmingly pronounced and conscious. The metropolitan region’s northeastern sector, including the comunas of La Reina, Las Condes, Vitacura and Lo Barnachea, as well as parts of Providencia, Ñuñoa, Peñalolén and La Florida, are characterized by a high concentration of the city’s wealthiest families. According to research conducted by the Chilean marketing firm GeoAdimark and published in 2006, Santiago’s wealthiest income bracket, whose average income is equivalent to US$6035 a month, makes up just over 11 percent of the city’s population. Around 20 percent of the city’s population occupies the second socioeconomic tier, with an average monthly income of US$2259, less than half of what the highest tier earns on average (see figure next page).
Sabatini highlights two important changes in recent decades that have contributed to increasing residential segregation: the liberalization of the land market and the overwhelming trend of economic and cultural globalization (2001). He argues, both factors have resulted in the concentration of elites and expulsion of the impoverished to peripheral zones of the urban sphere. When Santiago began its growth and modernization in the 1930s, the city’s population was concentrated in the city center, the comuna called “Santiago.” However, as the city’s population grew and its center became increasingly commercialized, diversified and subject to crime and poverty, the wealthy fled outward and constructed privileged sectors of the city, leaving much of the city center and its peripheral areas to the poor. Sabatini asserts that, while the two concepts are intimately related, spatial segregation is distinct from social inequality (2001). In fact, he suggests that the historical development of segregated and class-concentrated zones has
contributed not only to exclusive social practices, but also inclusive ones, claiming that marginalized and privileged groups alike now use their place of residence as a “form of affirming their identities,” much like class-marked speaking styles. In *Pobre Rico*, the influence of spatial situation within the urban landscape upon identity formation is a prominent theme, and one that largely reflects attitudes and social markers that exist in Santiago, both presently and in the city’s recent history. When Freddy leaves the barrio for the city’s wealthy sector, for example, his family and friends express concern that he will lose his sense of belonging and community among them, a complication that continues throughout the series.

Corro et al. refer to “privileged spaces” of interaction among members of distinct social classes in cinematic and television productions in Chile of the 1990s. The street, plazas, beaches, cafés, discotheques and other locales in the public sphere allow for interaction among actors of differing socioeconomic status (Corro et. al. 2009). These spaces, which García Canclini refers to as “micro-social structures,” are often marked by class connotations of their own (1995, p. 209). Closed, intermediary spaces like Máximo’s office also figure into the discourse of class-based hierarchy and transgression, where “los conflictos de clase y de género…motivan muchos argumentos melodramáticos” (Corro et. al. 2009, p. 89). In the teleserie, members of differing socioeconomic groups transgress the typical spatial boundaries between socioeconomically distinct groups in Santiago, entering one another’s homes and private spaces because of an outlandish, dramatized situation. Those transgressions allow for the expression of outward discomfort and tension among characters that find themselves in unusual positions, both spatially and relationally. Later in the show, when Eloísa moves from her
home in the barrio to the gated community in La Dehesa with her fiancé, Alex, the series’
drama and plot raise concerns about leaving her friends and community, as well as
questions about whether her humble origins or new, elevated socioeconomic situation
define her place within society, exploring the notion of “environmental determination” in
one’s social status in Santiago (2009, p. 97).

Segregation takes place not only among but within communities. While the “elite”
communities of Santiago are highly segregated from other areas of the city, segregation
within those communities might be considered relatively low, as the disparity in average
incomes within a residential sector can be extremely high, often greater than 200 percent,
since “second tier” of Santiago’s socioeconomic elite earns, on average, less than half of
what the “top tier” earns on a monthly basis (Sabatini 2001). Within the city’s wealthiest
residential communities, such as La Reina, Providencia and Ñuñoa, those somewhat
socioeconomically disparate groups frequently coexist. Transitional comunas in the mid-
to southeastern sector of the city, like Macul, La Florida and Peñalolén, have even greater
socioeconomic diversity, housing families with incomes ranging from the wealthiest ten
percent to the poorest ten percent of the city’s inhabitants. On the other hand, within
comunas and areas in which incomes tend to be lower, marked by a high degree of social
homogeneity, poverty is both segregated and concentrated, resulting in large part from
the stigmas that form around particular impoverished regions and neighborhoods. Areas
with the largest concentration of family incomes in the lower 10 to 40 percent tend to be
both isolated and socioeconomically homogeneous. In the teleserie’s pilot episode, a
conversation between Martina and Freddy ends in a shouting match about who, through
the experience of swapping environments, is learning more about the “real Chile,” Freddy
himself or Nicolás. In their conversation, the two refer explicitly to particular comunas and neighborhoods of Santiago, those with which each identifies his/her own version of “los realidades del país.” Martina decries “comunas picantes,” and Freddy, the “comunas cuicas.” The argument ends when the two decide that they will never agree on the topic.

Segregation within the cartography of Santiago deals not only with geographically delineated political-administrative regions, like comunas and provincias, but also with social spaces within the city that have been defined in relation to socioeconomic, cultural and political trends throughout the city’s history. Due to rapid economic globalization and capitalization of the city in the past half-century, the emergence of business centers, offices, malls, supermarkets, hotels, entertainment parks, movie theaters and other social spaces have emphasized the economic and social disparities within and among the city’s geographic regions. Public transportation, a democratizing feature of many modern cities, is portrayed as a marker of class in the teleserie. Since the city’s first metro line opened in 1975, the system has expanded to include four additional lines, with two more planned for completion in 2016 and 2017. Public transport underwent a massive improvement effort in 2007 with the formal creation of “Transantiago,” by which routes and schedules for buses, or “micros,” across the city were coordinated into a centralized system. With its expansion in recent decades, the city’s public transportation system has come to be widely used by most residents of Santiago on a consistent basis, especially for travel to and from work, school and other daily commutes. However, among upper and upper-middle class adults in Santiago, stigmas associated with the “lower class” surround public transportation, especially the “micro” or public bus. Wealthy to upper middle-class
members of Chilean society drive their own cars, and often reside in regions of the city where neither the metro nor micro reach.

The topic of transportation causes considerable strain and explicit class distinction among the characters of *Pobre Rico*, as Freddy’s friends and family must travel over an hour by micro to visit him at the Cotapos home in the upper northeast sector of the city. The show underscores Nicolás’ unfamiliarity and discomfort with public transportation, as he is shown in the opening title sequence uncomfortably riding on a crowded micro, while Don Máximo tosses Freddy the keys to a brand-new SUV. When Nicolás purchases his first pre-paid “Bip!” swipe card to ride the metro with Eloísa, he comically comments that “VIP” has been misspelled. Eloísa begins to cry on the way home with Nicolás in Episode One when she sees a street musician performing on the micro bus, a common manifestation of the city’s prolific informal labor market. She explains to Nicolás that she and Freddy have always enjoyed listening to the musicians on the micro together, emphasizing a shared cultural experience among many passengers on the micro, typically members of a similar low to mid-level socioeconomic class.

Today, the city’s center of commerce lies not in the central comuna of Santiago, as it did at the turn of the century, but in the northeastern comuna of Las Condes. This elite business region, referred to informally as “Sanhattan,” lies more than an hour’s commute on public transportation from much of the city’s western region, especially during business traffic hours. The physical inaccessibility of the commercial hub is compounded by other social and economic factors that impede entrance by underprivileged outsiders. Among these barriers to access are the high prices for public transportation, expectations of education, appearance and speech, requirements of
citizenship, resources to hire care for children or other family members at home during the workday and a lack of access to privileged information about available jobs. Growing crime and delinquency in the city center have also contributed significantly to residential segregation, with overwhelming flight from the crime-ridden, low-income neighborhoods and regions in the city’s western, southern and central zones. Safety in Santiago has been commodified in recent decades with the explosion of “condominios cerrados” in the city’s wealthy neighborhoods. The Cotapos family occupies both the elite commercial and residential spaces of the city, outside of which they rarely venture.

CHAPTER TWO: Elitist Discourses in Media of the Military Regime and Pre-Reform Period

The national network began creating soap operas at the beginning of the 1980s, airing its first telenovela, Amelia, in 1981. By 1985, the teleserie La Dama del Balcón, was the first on the national channel to be censured by the State for its content. Certain episodes of the show were cancelled on account of controversial references made to the Second World War, including German scientific experiments from the period and former Jewish prisoners of war (emol.com, 2013). The show’s unusual plotline begins with an art collector who purchases a painting from 1939 depicting a woman on a balcony, then meets an identical Spanish woman, Olga, who is living in Santiago. The show concludes with a revelation that the woman was involved in a genetic experiment during the Second World War that has prevented her from aging, and that she also gave birth to an identical daughter, played by the same actress in the series. While the program’s supernatural element is somewhat atypical of telenovelas during this period, its socio-economically
elevated and homogeneous cast of characters typifies the telenovelas produced during the 1980s. Aside from its explicit censorship of controversial content, this series exemplifies the types of thematic exclusiveness and representational limitations that necessitated the reformation of the national channel. This show, among others of the period, alienated viewers on two levels: portraying events and characters with little basis in the national reality, and limiting its scope to the society’s elite class. The show’s singular venture outside of the realm of the elite involved the mysterious Olga’s romantic affair with a Chilean gypsy man, Milkeno, whose superstitious family warns him that “Esa mujer atrae la muerte.” However, the stereotyped portrayal of this subcultural group precludes any attempt to explore a more nuanced representation of the minority and its incorporation or transculturation within modern society.

The national channel’s 1987 teleserie, *Mi Nombre es Lara*, tells the story of a young, classically trained ballet dancer, Lara, who is looking for work and living with her mother. She is engaged to Alfredo, an employee of a commercial television station and childhood friend. In the series’ opening scene, Alfredo is shown speaking with a fellow employee at the station about Lara, recounting their plans to be wed in six months, and his concerns about financing their wedding and married life. While the dialogue suggests that he and Lara are struggling to make ends meet, aesthetic and other elements of the show suggest otherwise. In the pilot episode, Alfredo is shown wearing clean-cut pastel-colored polos, khaki pants and a sweater tied over his shoulders, with no perceptible difference in quality from the clothing of his superior at the station, Pablo Mondetti. He also owns a motorcycle and has stable employment at the television station. Lara, despite being unemployed and concerned about finances, lives comfortably with her mother in a
typical, middle-class home, and dresses in high-fashion clothing and oversized jewelry. In the series, Lara appears not only beautiful, but also glamorous, exceedingly well groomed and dressed in the era’s latest fashions. Though she and her fiancé represent the series closest attempt at a portrayal of the lower class, their concerns are clearly and firmly seated within the middle class – any kind of real poverty or suffering is excluded from the telenovela’s content entirely. A discourse glorifying notions of modernity and wealth in a newly Capitalist society are emphasized in the series’ title sequence: a woman on the telephone turns to smile at the camera, makeup artists surround the other female characters, and others are shown in front of oversized film reels, a costume rack and television monitors and equipment. As a classically trained ballet dancer, Lara represents a privileged subset of the middle class, as she has had access to expensive lessons, uniforms and equipment for a sustained period of time. While the pursuit of such a pastime would not be possible for an impoverished family, the show does not mention any significant change in the family’s socioeconomic situation that would shed light on why a shortage of funds might have become a greater concern that it previously had been. Lara’s dedication to an expensive and traditional activity like ballet, especially with aspirations of making a professional career in dance, contrasts the notion of destitution and struggle that the teleserie superficially projects onto the characters of Lara and her mother.

The element of linguistics in the show likewise suggests a similar homogeneity of class and exclusion of marginalized voices. Each of the characters – from the television producers to Lara’s “pobre pero honrada”\textsuperscript{1} mother – speaks clearly, excluding perceptible

\textsuperscript{1} Ureta, Sebastian. “‘There is one in every home’: Finding the place of television in new
linguistic markers of social class that appear in *Pobre Rico* and other post-dictatorship teleseries that will be herewith explored. Only the content of the conversations among the various characters in the series suggests discourse of class and im(morality). Initially unable to secure a job dancing on a show at the commercial television station where Alfredo works, Lara begins to work as a dancer at a Santiago nightclub. Her mother expresses her scandalization when Lara’s agent comes to their home to discuss the nightclub deal: “Pero, ella es una bailarina clásica!” Alfredo, too, is disappointed and angry with Lara, telling her that she needs to find more “honest” work. He even threatens to break off their engagement if she continues to dance at the nightclub. Lara briefly raises the question of what such a declaration means for the nature of their relationship, but the point is breezed over with a brief and only mildly heated conversation. Lara seems not to morally question the job of dancing in the nightclub, and is both confused and upset by Alfredo’s extreme reaction. But by the end of the pilot episode, the “moral conflict” of Lara’s position at the nightclub is cleanly disengaged and resolved when Alfredo’s boss Pablo, enamored with Lara, finds her a place on the station’s dancing show. Lara quickly rises to fame, and her problems shift from the supposed class struggle suggested at the beginning of the show to the pressures of fame and jealous colleagues on the dance show.

The narrative of the nightclub highlights the connections between space, class and morality in the show. At the nightclub, Lara wears a purple wig and is dressed in a costume that is sequined and avant-garde, but not at all suggestive or revealing. The dance, which Lara performs with three other unidentified girls, is neither risqué nor homes among a low-income population in Santiago, Chile.” *International Journal of Cultural Studies.* 11:4 (2008). 477–497. Print.
sexually suggestive in any significant way. Further, the audience at the club includes members of the middle and wealthier classes, among them Alfredo’s boss, Pablo Mondetti, who recognizes Lara. He accosts Lara after the show, and like Alfredo, also implores her to find more “honest” work. When Lara refuses to listen, Pablo exerts his power over her, pulling her out of the dressing room by the hand. Lara’s lack of physical resistance, inconsistent with her verbal refusals to leave the nightclub, cast her as weak and easily dominated by the more powerful upper class male. Other spaces in the series similarly connote certain notions of class, morality and modernity. The television station’s state-of-the-art equipment, full staff of entertainers and media professionals, and its power to distribute messages to millions of people, put the space in a position of elevated social status in the developing urban society.

The narrow focus of the show is accentuated by how little of the city outside the television station is visible. This fact results in part from technological inadequacies of TVN at the time to film outside of an internal studio space until later in the decade and during the 1990s (Corro et. al. 2009), but carries thematic weight as well in the constricted view of both popular public and marginalized private spaces in the series. The dramatics that occur in the television station throughout the show occur among a privileged group of individuals, whose struggles, including their supposed monetary struggles (as in the cases of Lara and Alfredo), occur within a space of particular privilege. This limited scope, focusing only on the elevated and educated elites within the society, precludes a discussion or portrayal of other realities in Santiago at the time. While examples of later series in Chilean television history of examples which will be explored in this work often include flawed and reductionary portrayals of the lower class,
this show, among others during the 1980s, attempted to exclude exposure or representation of the lower classes of Chilean society almost completely.

The first show to begin airing after the 1989 referendum that removed Pinochet and his military regime from power was called *El Milagro de Vivir* (1990). Starring Francisco Reyes (Máximo of *Pobre Rico*) in his soap opera debut, the show follows five recent medical school graduates as they embark on their professional careers, beginning with graduation from a prestigious medical doctorate program in the pilot episode. The show represents the Chilean iteration of what had become an explosively successful model in North America, with medical dramas like General Hospital and the first version of ER in 1984. Though set in Chile with Chilean characters and context, the show can hardly be said to represent (or even aim to represent) the realities of the country. The plot cleanly distinguishes those doctors with “pure intentions,” like the honest and well-meaning Miguel, from those who only care for money, like Reyes’ character, a greedy and selfish plastic surgeon named Ricardo. Early in the show, however, even Ricardo develops an empathetic personality when he meets Elcira, a young female patient whose face has been badly disfigured by a burn, and falls in love with her almost instantly. The discourse in favor of the benevolent wealthy class is evident in the plot: thought it is the young patient, the common woman, who changes Ricardo’s heart, it is Ricardo, who “saves” her from her condition of disfigurement and obscurity by bestowing on her his affections. Corro, et. al. argue that the telenovela, a genre with major impact on communities in Latin America, typically does not focus on stories of the “professional hero,” such as medical or detective dramas, but rather most often “fictionally revalues the problems of the home, the woman and the daily concerns of the common people” (2009,
The presence of a medical drama on the national network on the heels of the newly-disbanded military regime and its adamant neoliberal globalism demonstrates the continued influence of market logic and a disconnect between those in power and the social and class-based realities and desires of their nation.

CHAPTER THREE: Political transition and discourses of exceptionalism

The first show to air on the national network following the fall of the military regime was called *Volver a Empezar* (1991), whose storyline centered around the return of exiled intellectuals and other “exiliados” from the military regime. Margot, a successful writer who was exiled during the reign of Pinochet, returns to the country in order to right her relationship with her son, Pedro Pablo and his wife. The series, whose directly political and current plot topic had never before entered the publicly broadcasted discourse, received an average rating of merely 14.7 points (Corro et. al. 2009, p. 127). While this poor score may be attributable to a flop or a fluke, it is more likely that the thematic content of the show was off-putting to viewers, causing discomfort with the controversial topic of the dictatorship’s very recent regime change and its consequences within the society. The show features many of the nation’s most popular and well-known television actors – Yael Unger, Alfredo Castro, Francisco Reyes and Claudia di Girólamo – and its story is constructed with a similar structure, character profile, setting and style to previous shows on the national channel. As this study explores teleseries aired later in the decade, we will see that many similar topics were met with more success and public receptiveness as they were introduced more gradually and subtly into the public sphere. *

*Volver a Empezar* was likely a case of too much too soon.
The TVN teleserie produced in 1992, the year in which Congress mandated the state channel’s structural and missional reorientation, was a show called *Trampas y Caretas*. The show represents a response to the low ratings of *Volver a Empezar* with a return to the more traditional plot structure and thematic focus upon the Chilean bourgeoisie. The show begins with the setting of a wealthy widow, Carmen, in her mansion estate, describing her two 30-year old twin sons to the lawyer who will be managing the transfer of her wealth to them. Maximiliano, played by Francisco Reyes, is responsible, calm and subdued, working as an art collector and commissioner, living in the mansion with his mother and pursuing a classical study of the violin. Luis Felipe, by contrast, is wild and a womanizer, resistant to settling down. Carmen expresses that her only desire is to see the two of them married, happy and stable, but it is clear that her priorities and expectations do not align with her sons’ priorities or timelines for their own lives. The adult sons’ resistance to Carmen’s traditional values is portrayed in the show as a fault and a hindrance to their success and proper social formation. Luis Felipe represents an extreme of immaturity and sexual deviance, whereas Maximiliano is stereotyped as weak and impotent for his slow and timid romantic progress with his violin instructor, with whom he is plainly enamored.

Just days before Carmen has arranged to transfer millions of her wealth to her indulged sons, Luis Felipe has arranged to be married to a mysterious woman whom he has introduced to no one. As a gathering of family and friends await the bride’s arrival outside the church, Luis Felipe approaches the limousine and extracts a stuffed, gorilla doll in a bridal dress. Scandalized by the affair, Carmen becomes enraged and realizes the disservice she has done to both her adult sons by supporting and indulging them.
financially. She decides to cut off their cash flow and tells them she’s taking a vacation to Switzerland, during which time she remains in Santiago and undergoes plastic surgery. Carmen returns after recovery looking young and rejuvenated, and begins work on a project to construct a “Mall de las Artes” in Las Condes, featuring local artists alongside retail stores. Concurrently, she hires Mariana, played by Claudia di Girólamo, to play “matchmaker” for both of her sons, a woman whose boyfriend, Vittorio, played by Mauricio Pesutic, is an artist who hopes to make connections with Carmen and her project. In the pilot episode, Mariana and Vittorio have a conversation in their cramped, loft-style home about a job offer Mariana has received from a business in Concepción, about which she is thrilled. But as an artist, Vittorio says he must stay in Santiago, where the major art scene of the country is located, in order to achieve success in his work. In the course of a single conversation, Mariana agrees that she will not leave Vittorio for her job in Concepción, though her opportunity there is more concrete than his situation as an artist striving to be discovered in the city. Shortly after Mariana decides to stay with her man in Santiago, she begins her lucrative work for Carmen, affirming her decision and reinforcing the traditional values of the middle-class woman’s role in relationships and in society. While the show questions the materialism of the elite class somewhat, its representation of the “lower” socioeconomic strata of Chilean society is limited to Mariana and Vittorio, who are more accurately situated in the middle class, and soon gain access to exceptional opportunities through their connection with a wealthy and powerful elite figure like Carmen. The discourse of the teleserie attributes the couple’s success to their moral exceptionalism within the “lower class,” as if good nature and kind favor
from socioeconomic superiors are the only means by which a marginalized individual might elevate himself from his socially excluded status.

In 1993, TVN began airing a series called *Jaque Mate*, or “Check Mate,” a remake of a 1976 Brazilian series, *Xeque-mate*. This show also deals with conflicts and tensions among members of the upper class, this time, between two fictitious wealthy and powerful Santiago families, los Quesney y los Moller. The two families have shared ownership and management of the “Banco de la República” for decades, but the patriarch of the Quesney family, Don Gabriel, is bedridden and unable to maintain his partial ownership and oversight. Rodolfo, the scheming eldest son of the Moller family, takes his father’s position, plotting to overtake the entirety of the bank by marrying Gabriel’s daughter, Paula Quesney. He plots to bring the bank to a breaking point so that he can rescue it, demonstrating his capability and heroism in order to seize full ownership.

Paula, however, is stubbornly resistant to Rodolfo’s persistent advances. When he puts Paula in a trap by proposing to her at a cocktail party and telling her that she either must marry him or a vagabond he finds on the street, Paula confidently chooses the vagabond, played by Francisco Reyes. As the series progresses, it is clear that Paula intends to clean up the vagabond, Nicolás, and prepare him to take over the family bank, which comes to fruition at the end of the show. Nicolás (Nico), a drunkard and beggar, lives in a cluttered warehouse with two men, Schwartz and Jonathan, and Chery, Jonathan’s girlfriend. As Nicolás begins to interact with Paula, the series demonstrates a discourse of moral exceptionalism; Nicolás is shown behaving more honorably in relation to Paula than his friends who steal and drink constantly. To complicate the simple discursive dynamic, however, viewers later learn, through conversations with a priest who befriends Nicolás,
that Nicolás was formerly a top business executive driven to personal and financial ruin by the rejection of a woman – none other than Paula’s sister, Isabela, who has since moved to Los Angeles, USA with her gringo lover, where she goes by “Tess.” As Paula helps Nicolás to get his life back in order throughout the show, underlying this narrative is the knowledge that Nicolás is returning to a prior state of wealth and prestige, discovering that he has not always been destitute and “immoral.” The show’s discourse of Nicolás’ exceptional virtue within the delinquent and dishonest impoverished class is undercut with notions of biological determinism, as Nicolás only slipped into poverty later in life as a result of tragedy rather than socio-structural factors.

Another complication in the simplistic divide between wealthy and poor in the show is the presence of Aldo, the son of the housekeeper and the driver of the Quesney family, whom the benevolent Don Gabriel considered to be like his own son. Aldo works in the bank and, until Nicolás enters the scene, is considered to be the Quesney family’s only hope for maintaining ownership of their share of the bank. Aldo and his parents reside on the grounds of the Quesney estate, and Aldo, through his job at the bank, has one foot in each of the worlds with which he interacts. Developing a love interest with Rodolfo’s younger sister in the series’ early episodes and sneaking out of work to meet at her country club, Aldo finds himself in trouble with Rodolfo, his new boss, who punishes him by sending him to work at another branch of the bank outside of Santiago. This conflict heightens the tension within the Quesney family, and their pressure to find a successor to Don Gabriel through reliance on Nicolás as their only hope.

Various aesthetic elements of the show reinforce this class-based moral divide. Nicolás’ beggar friends who live with him in the warehouse are portrayed as crass and
morally loose, speaking with their mouths full of food, cursing and drinking nearly constantly. Schwartz, Jonathan and Chery dress in a grungy punk style influenced by the 1980s rock era, an alternative aesthetic that is comparable to the “flaite” style of the current moment, a term and aesthetic that had not yet developed at the time this show was created. The dwelling itself is dirty, dim and littered with discarded, broken furniture. Nicolás’ bed consists of a humble frame and bare mattress among the piles of debris that fill the space, with no indication of any effort toward upkeep. The four beggars are juxtaposed with the morality of the local priest when they seek his financial help, repainting the church to earn money but refusing to attend services. Sebastian, the head of the house staff at the Quesney home, tells Paula that Nicolás “nunca se va a cambiar en el fondo,” without the knowledge that “en el fondo,” Nicolás is a former member of the elite himself. Though Nicolás does succeed in the end, it is unclear how much of his success can be attributed to his past experience, status, and behavioral conditioning and how much can be attributed to the hard work that any person would have to exert in order to pull himself up and out of poverty.

The show also introduces a thread that has not been present in earlier programs on the national network, and that is a direct representation of the urban middle class. A subplot of the series follows a couple – the whining, materialistic, hyper-sensualized housewife, Mímí, and her nervous, frugal accountant husband, Onofre, who live in an apartment across from the practical but paranoid Jewish jeweler, Jacobo. These three characters throughout the show come to represent middle class society in Santiago, Chile through stereotypified notions and exaggerated archetypes. These characters’ connection to the main plot of the series is peripheral, and the scope through which this majority of
the urban Chilean population is examined is highly restricted and particular. Though they
represent an attempt to incorporate a broader and more diverse cast of characters in the
realm of the teleserie, the resulting vignettes are racist and narrow, reinforcing simple
stereotypes of class difference. Another important character, the priest, becomes an
intermediary between the upper and lower classes, arranging and facilitating the early
meetings and interactions between Nicolás and Paula. The presence of the priest and his
role as a mediator among individuals of distinct classes and walks of life demonstrates
the sustained dominance of traditional Catholic values in Chilean society at this historic
moment despite the secularization of the official state.

Linguistically, the series ventures to diversify the representation of classes, as
viewers are exposed, virtually for the first time, to class-marked linguistic alterations on
television. Among the elite characters in the show, los Quesney, los Moller, their friends,
business partners and even their staff, the characters’ speech is similar to the linguistics
present in previous teleseries, that is to say, of moderate speed and clear annunciation,
nearly void of any informalities or alterations. The middle class characters’ speech is
marked more by their individual idiosyncracy and stereotype – Jacobo’s Judaism, Mimi’s
high-pitched whining, Onofre’s anxious mumbling – than their shared class association.
The impoverished characters, however, Schwartz, Jonathan and Chery, all speak with
many of the linguistic markers also present in *Pobre Rico* with respect to a lower
socioeconomic status, including slang terms and deletions. After repainting the church’s
exterior in an early episode, for example, Schwartz complains to the priest, “Estamos re
cansa’os!” The names and nicknames of these characters, derived Anglo names, also
demarcate a distinction of class, as was the case among several of *Pobre Rico*’s lower-class characters.

Nicolás, a particular case among the others, uses altered linguistic forms in the presence of his beggar friends, but in private conversations with elevated company such as Paula, Rodolfo, and even the priest, he is able to speak with little or no linguistic alteration, setting him apart, if only on a subconscious level, from other characters in his socioeconomic situation. This series contains the first explicit mention of the term “cuico” in a teleserie on the national channel; Nicolás uses the term in a heated conversation he has with Schwartz, who is bothering Nicolás, half-jokingly, about refusing Paula’s first marriage proposal. Nicolás asks Schwartz why he so adamantly thinks that he should have agreed: “¿Por que?! ¿Porque es cuica?!”. The term does not appear commonly in the series, and when Nicolás uses it, the term carries the impact of a biting insult, evident in the degree to which Schwartz backs down in response. This reaction reflects the reality that the term has not yet become a naturalized part of the Chilean slang vernacular, as it appears in later TVN teleseries including the most current, *Pobre Rico*. From the first few episodes of the show, viewers are shown hints of Nicolás’ honor and stubborn pride, juxtaposed with the more shallow, immediate and immoral desires of his companions. Nicolás confronts Paula about her marriage proposal in the office of the priest in episode two, saying, “No soy objeto ni una cosa.” Later, in a letter he writes apologizing to Paula, Nicolás writes, “No estoy por venta.” He initially resists Paula’s advances, feeling objectified and forced into the Quesney family scheme, but over the course of the show, Nicolás’ burgeoning relationship with Paula allows him to accept and ease into a sense of responsibility to the family.
With a greater diversity of spaces and settings shown in this series than in previous shows, the discourses of class-based exceptionalism and (im)morality find still broader representation. Beyond the class-marked aesthetics of domestic spaces and spheres in the city (in this instance, the grandiose Quesney home compared with the disrepair of the beggar’s dwelling place), exterior, public spaces like the church, Jacobo’s jewelry store and a nightclub convey more nuanced messages of class. In the church, Nicolás’ honorable pride is accentuated through honest conversations with the priest about his past and current predicament. By contrast, when his fellow beggars accompany him after painting the church’s exterior, Nicolás tells the priest, “Solamente estamos aquí para ganar plata. Por favor, no sermones.” Apart from revealing plot and conflict to viewers, the church serves as a device in the early episodes of the show to highlight the immorality of the “godless” poor, who live their lives separated from the ways of the church. This discourse emphasizes the show’s conservative orientation toward traditional Catholic values. In the jewelry store, Jacobo, the Jewish owner, is victimized by both members of the impoverished and wealthy classes; Jonathan and Chery are forceful with Jacobo when they come to his shop to pawn Paula’s diamond bracelet they have found, and Rodolfo hires a man to threaten Jacobo in his shop when he learns that Jacobo has purchased the “stolen” bracelet. In Episode Seven, Jonathan and Chery are shown dancing in a crowded nightclub, a space highly marked by stigmas of both low to lower-middle class and loose morality, accentuating the portrait of their relationship in contrast to the moral relational progression between Paula and Nicolás, mediated by the priest in the church and later within the context of Paula’s home. Another intermediary space, the office of Banco de la República, also carries a discourse of class and morality, as the
perverse Rodolfo Moller moves into Gabriel’s office and removes Gabriel’s more traditional decorations and portraits, replacing them with contemporary art, while Gabriel is still in the hospital on his deathbed. This act scandalizes others who prefer to conserve the room as Gabriel left it, at least while he remains alive, as a way to symbolize his continued presence and influence.

Though the series addresses the issue of space in a more significant way than previous teleseries on the national channel, it does so selectively, excluding many broader discussions about spatial division that can be found in later series. In Episode Four for instance, when Nicolás travels to the Quesney home to deliver a letter for Paula, the series makes no mention of how he arrived or the distance he traveled from his poor neighborhood to her exclusive, wealthy one. Whereas later shows, including *Pobre Rico*, place significant focus on spatial segregation within the city, the role of public transport and the inaccessibility of the elite communities to the outside population, *Jaque Mate* does not address these concerns in a significant way.

**CHAPTER FOUR: A Second Decade of Transition**

The lucidity and candidness with which class is addressed in the Chilean teleserie and other cultural productions undeniably increased in the later years of democratic transition due to socio-structural and political shifts. Following a 1999 meeting of the Congress of ICARE (Instituto Chileno de Administración Racional de Empresas), a new form of classification of different sectors of the population, or “segmentation of the market,” was introduced in Chile. The model, recommended by ESOMAR (Asociación Internacional de Empresas de Investigación de Mercado) and borrowed from European
contexts, divides the society into lettered categories called Grupos Socioeconómicos (GSE): ABC1, C2, C3, D and E. Rankings are based upon two basic measurements: the level of education of the head of household, and the possession of ten basic goods (shower, color TV, refrigerator, dishwasher, water heater, microwave, cable or satellite TV, computer, internet, vehicle). Marcela Miranda writes in the magazine “Que Pasa” that a system of measurement that asks directly about income, rather than questions about education and employment that have implications for income, is often met with a guarded response, especially by upper income (GSE ABC1) individuals with concerns for privacy and the security of their information. However, evidence from the 2002 census shows a correlation between the two measurements, and demonstrates that the two-variable system facilitates measurement (see figure below).

GSE ABC1 families are characterized by a high number of basic goods and university education, making up about 10 percent of the national population. Levels C2 and C3, just under half of the country’s population, are considered the “middle class.” The “working poor,” or GSE level D, make up about 35 percent of the population, and individuals/households at GSE level E, making up less than 10 percent of the population,
live in extreme poverty, with a monthly income of less than 120,000 pesos, or around US$250 (AIM 2008). The cited advantages of such a system of classification include objectivity, simplicity, international comparability, and the fundamental relationship of the variables to the purchasing power of a household and its individuals (Novomerc). According to the AIM Socioeconomics Group Report, “Lo que buscamos entonces es distribuir a la población en segmentos que discriminen respecto de su poder adquisitivo de consumo, de su calidad material de vida, nivel cultural educacional y estilo de vida. La idea no es replicar un concepto rígido de ‘clase social’ sino definir un ‘status socioeconómico,’ que nos ayude a comprender los patrones de consumo y a estimar la demanda potencial de los diferentes productos y servicios. La idea es entonces establecer una graduación ideal entre los individuos de mayor nivel o status socioeconómico hasta los menos favorecidos, quedando escalonados entre ambos extremos los restantes miembros de la sociedad.” (AIM 2008, p. 2)

While the system’s practical application as a scientific and demographic measurement has functioned more efficiently than past measures, its cultural implications for class-consciousness, discrimination, segregation and auto-categorization within Chilean society have been marked. In examining social structures in Chile from 1972-1994, German scholar, Max Koch (1999), sites a study by Pakulski and Waters (1996): “To their mind, neither the concept of stratification nor the concept of class is able to portray reality any longer; rather, a steady process of 'individualization' is leading us towards a 'capitalism without class'. Instead of sticking to the idea of antagonism between the classes of capital owners and wage laborers, or conceiving social structure in terms of a stratum-like order according to income, education and prestige, it would be much more
adequate to realize a pluralized structure of inequalities among the members of society.”

Koch developed his own structure by which to organize labor within the society, categorizing jobs as either skilled or unskilled commercial, manual or service occupations. Koch published his paper just before the implementation of the GSE system in Chile, which arguably placed the concepts of stratification and class among Chilean society’s most distinctly classifiable and measurable aspects. Since that time, the European GSE model of classification has become a part of the modern Chilean lexicon, in both formal and informal contexts, and the ideology of stark boundaries of class distinction and stratification among socioeconomic groups has gained acceptance among many urban Chileans. One definition of the term “cuico” in the Mainframe Diccionario de Modismos Chilenos refers explicitly to the GSE classification: “Entre el promedio de la poblacion es aquel con gran dinero, entre los ABC1 es aquel de alta alcurnia, con antecesores importantes y descendiente de español.” The ideas of descent, race, education and class are tied together in this and many of the other definitions offered for class-based slang terms on the Mainframe website.

By the new millennium, the thematic scope of the Chilean teleserie had widened with regards to class-based social realities of Chilean society. A show produced in 2001 called Amores de Mercado, was based on Mark Twain’s classic, The Prince and the Pauper. Its premise resembles that of Pobre Rico in that two members of distinct social positions are driven by circumstances to switch places and assume new and unfamiliar social roles. Much of the show takes place in the Mercado Central in the old center of Santiago, where tourist-targeted restaurants have replaced what was once truly the central marketplace for the city. One of the series’ main characters, Pedro, nicknamed “Pelluco,”
works with his friends in competing restaurants in the Mercado Central. One day, Pelluco witnesses a car accident outside the market and finds in the wallet of the unconscious man an ID card identifying the man as Rodolfo Ruttenmeyer, and the photograph on the ID card shows a man identical to Pelluco himself. The address leads Pelluco to a mansion in La Dehesa, where he is mistaken for Rodolfo by the house staff and greeted with a kiss by Rodolfo’s fiancé, Fernanda. She leads him through the house to their backyard wedding, taking place that afternoon. Pelluco begins to explain the mistake and calls of the wedding. But, enamored by Fernanda and the lavish surroundings he finds in Rodolfo’s home, he decides to allow the confusion to continue for a time. Meanwhile, the real Rodolfo awakes in a hospital with no recollection of who he is or anything before the accident. Without his wallet, the doctors are unable to identify him, but soon, Pelluco’s mother finds Rodolfo and mistakenly identifies him as her lost son. She brings him home and, with the help of her family and friends, begins to teach him about his life and past.

The show introduces a diversity of certain social identities that had been largely or entirely absent from earlier teleseries. Pelluco’s sister, Jessi, for example, is portrayed with a style and identity representative of the “flayte” aesthetic, similar to that of Pobre Rico’s Claudia. She dresses in loose pants and shoes, tank tops, fingerless gloves and an off-center cap, and expresses her plucky pride for her neighbors and position in the barrio, as do Freddy, Claudia and other young people from the barrio throughout Pobre Rico. Another character that complicates typical assignations of morality related to class and occupational space is a character called Shakira, who appears in a subplot of the series. Characters throughout the series question Shakira’s morality as a dancer in a nightclub, especially as she begins a romantic relationship with Esaú Galdames, a young
man from an ultra-religious family. This dynamic creates conflict among Shakira, Esaú and his family until the show’s concluding episode, when Esaú’s mother gives him her blessing to be with Shakira, though she admits that she still does not understand or fully accept Shakira’s occupation. Though conservative and Catholic values retain a presence in the show through these characters, the element of religion in Amores de Mercado does not take on a discursive role as in Jaque Mate, but rather serves a means by which to examine the strictures of those values. Another minor character with thematic significance is the flamboyant gay man who works as the bartender in the nightclub where Shakira is employed. Though the man’s portrayal in the show is stereotypified, his presence in the show, absent vilification by other characters or the discourse of the show’s writing, represents a thematic opening and shift from Chilean teleseries of the previous epochs analyzed here.

Another significant shift is apparent in the show’s representation of social class difference and class-based notions of morality. In contrast to earlier representations of lower socioeconomic status individuals as predominantly immoral, deviant and base, Amores de Mercado portrays a mostly positive, if simplified, persona among members of the lower class and residents of the barrio. Morally, the characters are not without fault; indeed, the pilot episode introduces Pelluco’s deception, a love affair between Pelluco’s mother and his best friend, and the questionable moral practices of several of the other restaurant workers in the Mercado Central. Throughout the show, the characters of the lower class are morally elevated, though not idealized to the same exaggerated extent as characters of similar social positions in later shows, including Pobre Rico and this chapter’s second text of analysis, the 2003 teleserie, Puertas Adentro. The workers of the
Mercado are, however, simplified and, to a certain extent, idealized in their portrayal as playful, jovial and childlike. For example, Pelluco’s first act upon deciding to remain at Rodolfo’s home is to take a bubble bath in his oversized Jacuzzi tub. When the female head of staff finds him in the tub and tells him to hurry up, Pelluco consents with false sincerity, diving back into the bubbles when she leaves. In a later scene, and throughout the show, a group of three female servers in a competing restaurant of the Mercado are portrayed with exaggerated and childlike happiness, for example, giggling and splashing one another while they work washing vegetables in the kitchen. Simplified syncretism and superstitious religiosity of these women are also featured and exaggerated throughout the show, calling attention to popular class- and education-based stereotypes placed upon working class individuals, especially women, in Chilean society.

With respect to the upper class, this show presents an image of corruption, greed and immorality among many in the younger adult generation. Rodolfo’s fiancé, Fernanda, is revealed to be having an affair with his adoptive brother, Ignacio, who initially appears supportive of his brother and their relationship. Later in the show, Ignacio secretly plots to overtake the family business, Inversiones Ruttenmeyer, and ultimately shoots Pelluco, whom he mistakes for Rodolfo, in the final episode of the teleserie. The older generation of upper-class citizens in the series is represented with greater moral division. Rodolfo’s mother, is revealed to be pursuing affairs outside her marriage, but his father is portrayed as earnest, honest and fair. At the end of the series, when the truth of the mistaken identity comes to light, Rodolfo’s father embraces Pelluco as a part of the family, despite his deceptive behavior and humble socioeconomic origins. Distinctions of class-based morality and exceptionalism in this show are less divisive than they appear in previous
shows, with both corruption and honesty playing more balanced roles in each social
group represented in the series.

One of the strongest thematic illustrations used to discuss and represent class
difference in the series is the characters’ use of language. With a tone of both confusion
and worry, Fernanda repeatedly notes the “strange” way in which Rodolfo (Pelluco) is
speaking, while Pelluco, seemingly unaware, or at least forgetful of the marked linguistic
difference between them, brushes off her concerns. In one of the couple’s first
interactions in the pilot episode, Fernanda asks, “¿Por qué hablas así, tan distinto?”
Fernanda is initially off-put when Pelluco refers to her with the class-marked, popular
term of affection, “mi reina.” At dinner with a group of Spanish business executives,
Pelluco speaks informally, to the discomfort of his colleagues, even making a toast with
the popular phrase, “Arriba, abajo, al centro, adentro!” Fernanda again expresses
confusion, with more specificity as to the class-based nature of her concern, “¿Que te
pasa Rodolfo? Pareces…no sé…roto.” The term, “roto” in such a context, connotes
specific notions held by the accommodated class of delinquency and malformation,
educationally and socially, among lower class citizens, an idea that, later in the decade,
was resignified in relation to the “flaite” identity and its contrasting term, “cuico.” By
contrast, the Spanish business executives receive Pelluco’s informality well in this scene,
laughing along and agreeing to the business deal he proposes, suggesting a subliminal
narrative of naturalization and de-stigmatization of popular linguistic patterns.

Throughout the series, however, contempt for the socioeconomic “other” is shown
from both the elevated and underprivileged classes. In the final episode of the series,
Jessi, upset that her mother never told her about Pelluco’s lost twin brother, addresses
Rodolfo with biting contempt, using slang labels of class and specific, class-marked identities of place: “Un hermano cuico, directamente de La Dehesa!” Later in that episode, before the entire family, Ignacio mocks Pelluco for his employment in the Mercado and Rodolfo for bringing his working-class girlfriend, Pelluco’s next-door neighbor, Betsabé, to a celebratory family gathering: “No contento con llenar la casa de rotos, nos presenta a tu novia popular!” The naming of characters also presents a significant discourse of class in the series. The assignment of nicknames (ie. Shakira, Pelluco, his father, “El Chingao,” his mother, ‘La Morocha,’ and friend from the Mercado, “El Clinton”), Anglo first names (ie. Jessi, Vicky, Connie) among characters of a lower social class serve to distinguish them on a basic, linguistic level from socially elevated characters with more traditional Hispanic names and Anglo last names (ie. Ruttenmeyer) serving to underscore their elite social status.

The importance of the element of space in the teleserie is apparent in the title of the series. The Mercado becomes a central motif in the show and a means by which to portray and discuss class distinction and its spatial manifestations and dimensions in modern Chilean society. A stark contrast is immediately established between the barrio and Mercado where Pelluco and his family live and work and the office building and mansion in La Dehesa that Rodolfo and his family occupy. Literally and symbolically, the two worlds come into contact only by accident, disrupting the typical and normalized division of the society. This “choque” is similar to the forced circumstantial interactions among distinct groups in Pobre Rico, occurring both in the public sphere (street, barrio, Mercado, etc.), increasingly accessible with new filming technologies, and in private or privileged “espacios cerrados,” such as the Ruttenmeyer home or commercial office.
These spaces are not marked by class only in their distinction from one another, but also in their material and symbolic significance to the individuals who either occupy or visit them. As the series represents through the characters actions and dialogue, the Mercado, for Pelluco, his neighbors and co-workers, represents not only a material livelihood, but also a shared cultural experience that unites many of its active participants. This social reality is discursively favored in the show when contrasted with the separatism and lack of collective identity within the society’s elite echelons. In the final conversation between the unlikely lovers, Fernanda and Pelluco, on his deathbed, the latter promises the former that when the two are married, they will have a party in the Mercado “con toda mi gente.” It is the last thought he expresses before he expires, the most important matter on his mind. The party occurs three months later with the opening of a new restaurant in the Mercado, “Dónde Pelluco,” where all of Pelluco’s friends and family are gathered, including los Ruttenmeyer, to celebrate his life. The final shot pans out over the scene, showing the entirety of the Mercado, the celebrating crowd and a _cumbia_ band that proceeds through the central hall. The series concludes with a tonal and thematic focus on the vitality, optimism and resilience of the community in the Mercado.

Another, less central discourse of class and morality through space appears through the presentation of the nightclub where Shakira works as a dancer. In contrast to the representation of the night club seen in _Mi Nombre es Lara_ (1987), where the moral issues associated with the space of the nightclub “La Nuit” are quickly resolved and largely unaddressed, _Amores de Mercado_ works through the moral complications of the space, highlighting assumptions, socio-cultural insensitivities and limited viewpoints held by certain individuals and groups within Chilean society. Esaú and his mother, deeply
religious and traditional, become lenses by which the show is able to explore these moral complications and introduce alternative viewpoints within the familiar framework of conservative characters and voices. In the end, Esaú’s mother, Alicia, admits that, while she may not understand Shakira’s work, she is finally able to accept her and give Esaú her blessing to be with the woman he loves. In *Amores de Mercado*, the nightclub is most often shown during the day, while Shakira and other employees of the club practice and prepare for the evening opening; in this way, the space is treated more like a business establishment and legitimate place of employment than it is in *Mi Nombre es Lara*, where the nightclub is represented as little more than a dark shell where Lara’s “dishonest” and immoral spectacle finds expression.

A 2003 teleserie called *Puertas Adentro* refers in its title to the Chilean “nana” or live-in maid figure who has long been an important part of middle and upper class Chilean society. This teleserie represents a leap in awareness of social issues from many of the series previously explored in this work, with regards to issues ranging from class distinction and political struggle to homosexuality. In the series, Claudia Di Girolamo plays Erika Sandoval, the long-term nana in the home of the wealthy Martínez family in Santiago’s upper northeastern region. Her fiancé, José Cárdenas, played by Francisco Reyes, is the leader of a popular campaign to retake a territory that powerful businessmen strong-armed from his poor and uneducated father years ago. Erika learns that the land now belongs to her employer, causing tensions in both her relationship with José and the Martínez family. The series raises conflicts related to the simultaneous proximity and distancing of the “nana” figure as a second-class citizen occupying the same space as the upper class family who employs her, considered on some level to be a part of that family.
An independent film titled *La Nana*, released in 2009, addresses similar themes in a way that is more thematically open and exploratory with regards to realities of race, class and (un)fair treatment in the relationships between nanas and their employers.

The portrait presented in *Puertas Adentro* idealizes the nana figure, Erika, to a greater degree than does *La Nana*, a later cultural production directed toward a national and international viewing audience. One major avenue through which the teleserie alters and idealizes the nana-employer relationship is the aesthetic element of race. Beginning in the 1990s, an influx of Peruvian immigrants entered Chile to escape political unrest in their home state. As of the 2002 census, the Peruvian migrant population in Chile was about 60 percent female, with about 70 percent employed as domestic workers, forming some 80 percent of all registered foreign laborers (Maher and Staab 2009). With economic growth and demographic shifts in Chile, fewer Chilean women were filling those domestic service roles, contributing to expansion in the market for Peruvian, female domestic workers. Many of the Peruvian women, having fled the jobs and lives they had held in Peru, brought with them a relatively high level of education, many of them university or junior college graduates. The average pay grade of a nana was well below the minimum wage until legislation was passed under the administration of President Michelle Bachelet, raising the minimum salary that could legally be paid to a nana in 2006. Despite this reality, stigmas of race and class came to be associated with the job of nana, resulting in further flight from the job by the Chilean women who had traditionally held those roles.

*Puertas Adentro* does not reflect this reality, and in fact, contradicts it on multiple levels. Claudia Di Girolamo is a fair-skinned, red-haired, natural born Chilean citizen
who, as Erika, bears linguistic markers of low class and education. While her linguistic patterns denote a lower socioeconomic status, her speech is uncharacteristically slow in pace and idyllic in content. As she is leaving the Martínez home in the final episode, having been fired suddenly by the matriarch, Mónica, Erika says to the heartbroken young adult daughter of the family, Javiera, whom she raised, “Voy a guardar los recuerdos bonitos y na’a má.” In an earlier episode, Erika makes a life-saving blood donation to the eldest Martínez, the man who stole the land her fiancé is fighting to reclaim, when no one else in the family is found to be a match. Later, Don Martínez comes to Erika’s home to deliver a check, which Erika stoically refuses, saying, “Hice lo que haría cualquier persona,” refusing notions of heroism placed upon her actions. This pivotal moment challenges the delineation of the nana as merely an employee of the household, but her continued discomfort with the family, especially Don Martínez, shows the superficiality of any supposed “incorporation” into the family. In the final episode, Erika admits to Javiera that she has spent more time with her than with her own children, and asks Mónica Martínez to be sure to take good care of “mis niños.”

The dynamics of linguistics in Chilean society are portrayed in the series with considerable adherence to linguistic realities. Erika, José and other characters associated with the “toma” of the territory, or “campamento,” speak with linguistic alterations previously explained in this work, including “r,” “s” and “d” deletion, altered verb endings and slang forms. Javiera, the daughter of a very affluent Chilean family, also speaks with alterations, including the altered “tu” form ending, around Erika, her boyfriend from the barrio, Jonathan, and other young people, but not around her parents, who do not speak with alterations themselves. Though the linguistic patterns in the show
do reflect realities of class distinction in Chilean Spanish, they do not reflect the realities of the typical, Peruvian “puertas adentro” domestic worker in Chilean society during the era in which this teleserie aired. Though certain ideas and themes in the show are markedly progressive, including the complex dynamic of the nana with her employer-family and a subplot of homosexuality between two males involved in the *toma*, its overall portrayal of the figure of the nana is regressive, reductive and idealized.

The idea of space becomes significant in *Puertas Adentro* in a different way than TVN’s previous teleseries. The large and grandiose Martínez home, situated in a wealthy neighborhood of the city, does not deviate much from previous representations of space, even dating back to the teleseries of the 1980s. While the juxtaposition of this space with the domestic spaces occupied by individuals of lower socioeconomic status in the show, including Erika’s own family, remains significant in representing the class-based segregation and dividing lines of the city, it does not register any significant change in the way in which the domestic spaces of Chile’s upper class are represented on television. By contrast, a space like the “terreno” or “campamento” undergoing the popular “retoma” in the teleserie, has a much stronger socio-political context and message underlying it. Through the conflict over the terreno, the series is able to give voice to populations that have been manipulated and disenfranchised based on their socioeconomic class and marginalized status. As in *Amores de Mercado* and *Pobre Rico*, space becomes a manifestation of identity and community, representing and demonstrating a shared historical context, ideology and cultural capital among the group of people who occupy it. This identity is also, in part, defined in opposition to those groups who do not occupy the space or belong to the community, creating an “us” vs. “them” dynamic. The
importance of the shared space of the terreno can especially be seen in the final episode of Puertas Adentro, in which the community confronts the team of bulldozers threatening to raze the “terreno” and refuses to move until a compromise can be negotiated. After the community wins out in this confrontation, Erika arrives on the scene and José proposes and the two are married on the spot, surrounded by “nuestra gente” on the land they historically owned and have just reclaimed.

CONCLUSIONS

The teleseries of TVN represent a distinct case within the genre of the telenovela, within Latin America and around the world, for several reasons. As a state-owned and independently financed television network, TVN differs fundamentally from many of the dominant television giants in other South American countries. Corporate conglomerates, like the massively influential networks Globo in Brazil, Televisa in Mexico and Cisneros in Venezuela, are differentiated from Chile’s national channel in several ways, with respect to their corporate structures, financing practices, programming strategies, and distribution patterns. The distinct priorities of these organizations manifest in both the informational news programming and entertainment content they produce, especially fictional series and programs. In response to a trend of deregulation and commercialization by European television networks during the 1980s, many Latin American television networks began to follow a similar model, privatizing and commercializing their own operations (Mazziotti 1996). Large networks like those of Brazil, Mexico and Venezuela increased exportation, which had begun in the 1950s and 1960s, of their entertainment programming, especially telenovelas, within Latin America
and beyond, to North America and Europe. The large networks, functioning as commercial enterprises, quickly found that the entertainment content they produced could not only gain heightened prestige, but also generate up to 20 times more revenue per episode, if sold in Germany, Italy and Spain, for example, than in another Central or South American country (Mazziotti 1996). Expansion of exportation to the African and Asian continents followed.

As a result, the nature and content of these productions shifted dramatically. The focus of the networks became centered on the production of the telenovela, its highest-grossing product, above all other media. Every aspect of these shows is strategically chosen and planned with both the national and international markets in mind, from the set to the soundtrack. These strategies differed among the countries; while Brazil’s Globo projected an ideal of modernity, Brazilian folklore and “fantastic realism,” Mexico’s Televisa produced telenovelas with a focus on melodrama and moralism (Mazziotti 1996). Mazziotti notes that the novelas in Mexico “tratan de no usar localismos ni palabras en inglés… los protagonistas no beben ni fuman en escena…” (1996, p. 50). This type of strategic content determination, excluding national particularities in order to be more marketable on an international scale, differs significantly from the content presented in the post-transition Chilean teleseries, as well as many of the series from the transition period. TVN has been a state-owned public channel since its establishment in 1964 and, following the 1992 reform of the network, its goals to represent national diversity and identity, and to direct its focus upon distribution within Chile, were made explicit in the revised mission statement: “Reflejar a Chile en toda su diversidad, contribuir a fortalecer su identidad nacional, y conectar a los chilenos en todo momento y
lugar” (Retrieved February 2013, from http://www.tvn.cl). The structure of the channel established in the reform includes a Board of Directors appointed by the President and ratified by the Senate, aimed at protecting and fomenting the national channel’s mission of public service. The current Board of Directors is headed by President Carlos Zepeda Hernández, a corporate and commercial lawyer, and Vice President Marcia Scantlebury Elizalde, a journalist who has focused her work on human rights, women’s rights and proffering aid in projects including the preservation of the historic torture site Villa Grimaldi and the establishment of the Museo de la Memoria under former President of the Republic, Michelle Bachelet. Other members of the board include two lawyers, two engineers, one businessman, one journalist, and a specialist in international relations. Two of the nine board members, one being the Vice President, are female (Retrieved February 2013, from http://www.tvn.cl). While the board is relatively diverse, its political leaning tends to sway in the direction of the current Congress’ majority parties, the center-right National Renewal and centrist Christian Democratic parties.

TVN also differs from other Latin American countries’ television superpowers in that its most significant national competitor, Canal 13, holds approximately equal influence and market share within the country. Canal 13 is owned by Luksic Group, an investment group with holdings in the mining, financial, industrial and beverage industries, and associated with the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. Because the vast majority of both Canal 13 and TVN teleseries’ viewers are within Chile, and since both networks must maintain and defend their respective positions within the country against a fairly even competitor, in what El Mercurio has called “La guerra de los teleseries,” concern for international marketability is secondary (December 9, 2012). This
is not to say that television production in Chile is cut off from international pressures or influences by any means; in fact, Chile and other countries in the region have also contracted many authors, directors, producers and other professionals from Globo in Brazil and have often adapted plots and emulated techniques that originated in the Brazilian context (ie. *Jaque Mate*). Nor has Chile rejected the export model of telenovela production entirely. In a 2001 interview with TVMAS Magazine, General Director of the TVN Board, Pablo Piñero, spoke of his plans to expand and internationalize the network’s productions via three initiatives. First, in 2001, the network’s website, www.tvn.cl, branched off from the previous www.tvchile.cl, which had been created in 1999. Second, the network continued the global expansion of its cable signal to other countries spanning five continents, a process which began in 1995 through the Señal Internacional Sociedad Anónima (Retrieved from www.tvn.cl, February 2013). The final goal was to begin a process of exportation of local television productions on a global scale. In the interview, Piñero recognized the importance and challenge of balancing the goal of internationalization with a continued focus on fortifying national culture: “Pero tal vez el principal desafío es que nuestro país ha entrado seriamente en la globalización y nuestra televisión encara uno de los más grandes retos como es mantener la identidad, las raíces, la cultura y la unidad” (*TVMAS Magazine*, June 2001).

The exportation model of Venezuela’s corporate conglomerate television network, Cisneros, has historically placed more focus on national culture than some of the other large television networks in the region in its strategy for international marketing and export. The network’s productions are concerned with elevating the cultural level of the collective citizenry and imparting Venezuelan culture abroad, with thematic focus on
more sophisticated, educational and/or “high culture” topics involving art and literature, history, science, biography (Mazziotti 1996). Cisneros’ television programs are produced in adherence to specific, pre-planned schemas and duration in order to avoid pressure from the network owners to extend the show or direct its progression of content in response to ratings. As a result of this corporate structuring, market forces arguably exercise less influence over the privately owned Cisneros’ television productions than those of TVN, whose production is still very much influenced by its constant ratings and share audience competition with other national and international television producers. TVN’s proclaimed duty and service to the nation as a public channel and the pressures of self-financing and market forces constitute an important tension within the national network.

As this work has explored, a strong trend of nearly exclusive focus on the socioeconomic elite of urban Chilean society seen in TVN’s early teleseries demonstrates the influence of a larger trend throughout Latin America, in response to often miserable social realities of economic hardship and political unrest during the 1970s and 1980s, creating idealized imaginaries within these contexts in order to “manufacture the dreams of a society” (Telenovelas: Love, TV and Power, 2003). In the Chilean context, social realities, political authoritarianism and other hardships of the time feature minimally if at all in the plotlines, dialogue and stylistic elements of the dictatorship era and early transition period teleseries, despite some superficial exploration that claims to address these issues. As Jofré argues, the Pinochet dictatorship altered communication on a national scale by the “reduction and transfer of private independent and leftist modes of communication to the authoritarian state” (1989, p. 74). State funding for propaganda
campaigns eclipsed minority or liberal discourses in favor of conservative, market-driven discourses smartly aimed at the masses, as a sort of “populist project” (p. 86). Elements of these dominant and forced narratives and their effect on popular cultural productions of the dictatorship era appear in the teleseries of the period, while the continued effects and influence of these logics, I have argued, can be seen throughout the gradual process of topical “apertura” that has occurred over the past two decades and will most certainly continue into the future. While we must acknowledge that the national channel has always been intentional about its role as an influential producer of national pop culture and collective imaginary, directives aimed at more inclusive social representation began to emerge only after the nation’s redemocratization.

With the official end of the military regime, its influence has gradually lifted and shifted within Chilean society, the national channel, and other producers of culture across the industries of entertainment and art, trending toward engagement in an evolving rearticulation of its role and its representation of the context in which it is produced. Particularly in the urban context where a majority of the nation’s population, cultural activity and political power are centered, these shifts and have resulted in parallel evolutions of television content, including thematic opening and diversification with respect to not only the plurality of identities, but also representations of class in relation to moral discourses. Despite this progress, representations remain mediated, albeit perhaps less fundamentally, by the prevailing market logic, residual policies and entrenched ideologies from the 17-year-long dictatorship. Corro et. al. argue that, under the enduring dominance of the dictatorial logic during the early transition period, many cinematic and television productions, among other forms of mass communication and
entertainment, actively constructed “mecanismos de distracción, de optimismo, trivial o cruel en un país en el que grandes grupos de chilenos sufrian restricciones económicas exclusión social, y persecución política” (2009, p. 116). Though a more diverse array of individuals and groups find representation in teleseries of the transition years, the means by which these characters and their lives are represented bear markers of a limiting and reductionary logic of class and other social distinctions. Teleseries of the early transition years made efforts to “democratize” the genre by attempting to diversify the characters and increase the visibility of certain marginalized social groups on television, but still, characters across the entire spectrum of socioeconomic class are represented during the early transition years in a manner that tended to reinforce accepted stereotypes rather than challenge traditional notions of morality associated with certain social classes. A right-wing understanding of popular culture, one that catered to a depoliticized understanding of the lower class, dominated the discourse of the genre during the transition period.

In the second decade of transition, with the reform of TVN’s mission, the national channel’s teleserie gradually shifted from the previous two decades’ trend of melodramatic storylines filled with wealth, romance and intrigue – only incidentally set in Chile – toward an attempt to fictionalize (and, in so doing, exaggerate) actual social realities of the nation and its diverse citizenry. With this change, evolving social and political issues gained a platform through more nuanced representation in the cultural productions of the national channel. Amores de Mercado (2001), despite its stereotyping, simplification and exaggeration, marks an attempt to represent and legitimize the activities, occupational roles and social standing of the working class and the spaces they occupy. The show portrays prejudices within both the upper and lower socioeconomic
groups through more complex characters and circumstances, offering alternative perspectives to the stereotypical notions of class, morality and traditional market-driven value systems presented during the dictatorial period. *Puertas Adentro* (2003) sets out to represent a specific and particularly Chilean cultural phenomena of the “nana,” a marginalized Chilean archetype with specific cultural significance. Though the show portrays Erika, the nana, in a manner that idealizes and whitewashes her character, its effort to recognize and legitimize the concerns, desires and emotional complexities associated with the marginalized “nana” figure are progressive and predate later cultural iterations in other media, such as the 2009 film, *La Nana*. The show also deals with more liberal social and political topics and conflicts including land disputes, homosexuality and teenage pregnancy.

Although the current moment in Chile has been called “post-transition,” I have called it a third decade of transition, in which the presence and importance of current social and political issues in the cultural discourse of the national channel’s teleserie has significantly increased. TVN’s current teleserie, *Pobre Rico*, includes episodes that not only respond directly to national political activity and social movements, but also comment on and differentiate among the roles that individuals of distinct social classes have played in the manifestation of social change, as well as the diverse ideologies they have articulated within the current national context. For example, the issue of education, being one of the most salient and divisive topics in Chile today, comes to feature prominently in later episodes of the show, as Freddy and several of his friends and neighbors participate in protests and proactive efforts to improve free public education at the *colegio* level. Máximo Cotapos makes a show of his support of the “movimiento
estudiantil,” in which many students of public schools and universities have organized to demand free tuition from the state. In Episode 170, however, Martina, the blond model who begins the show as Nicolás’ girlfriend, appears on a talk show to divulge her private insights into Cotapos’ impure motives, accusing him of planting “infiltrados” to disarm the student demonstrations. The episode’s political content is offered alongside further social content and commentary, fictionalizing for public digestion a central debate on Chile’s present-day political docket. The show’s idyllic portrayal of young activists like Freddy, who must confront powerful adversaries in their quest to bring equal education to the masses, reveals the network’s liberal leanings. While transition period teleseries represented the lower class as depoliticized and marginalized from the national collectivity, the third decade of transition, or “post-transition” period teleseries (i.e. Puertas Adentro, Pobre Rico), demonstrate a significant progression toward incorporating discourses of heightened social and political agency and activism within the lower class.

Thematic evolutions in Pobre Rico can be seen not only in relation to previous teleseries, but also within the show itself. The dynamics of class-consciousness in relation to space, for example, become more explicit as the show progresses, though in many cases the representation of these dynamics remains problematic and reductionary. In early episodes of the series, neither of the neighborhoods in which the Cotapos family or the Rivas family live are explicitly named. In later episodes of the show, however, the Cotapos family’s neighborhood is identified as La Dehesa, situated in the northeastern comuna of Lo Barnachea, and the Rivas family’s neighborhood is identified as Cerro Navia, one of the most densely populated and economically challenged comunas near
central Santiago. As characters move between the two barrios and throughout the city, great attention is paid to the spatial segregation of the city and the effect this segregation has on the dynamics of social interaction among members of distinct socioeconomic groups. The show also challenges typical notions of class division and determinism via stylistic elements, such as linguistics. While at the beginning of the teleserie, Máximo Cotapos is distinguished from Freddy, Eloisa and others from the barrio by his “proper” manner of speaking and lack of linguistic alterations, pronounced transformations in Cotapos’ style of speech, including increased speed, informality and linguistic alterations, appear later in the series. Through this transformation, however, Cotapos also begins to speak with a degraded level of sophistication and tact, as if his intelligence, level of education, and even his sense of morality, have regressed. These changes are implicitly, and quite problematically, attributed to his increased integration with the “lower class” community over the course of the series, particularly with Eloisa Rivas, with whom he develops an extramarital romantic relationship. Cotapos’ linguistic alterations are juxtaposed with the character of Virginia, his wife, whose speech remains consistent throughout the show’s progression. Although the transformation in the character of Máximo Cotapos challenges simplistic notions of linear, class-based determinism, it problematically appropriates and parodies stereotyped qualities associated with the lower class, including unconscious informality, irrationality, moral degradation, impulsiveness and lack of tact.

But while thematic and socio-cultural advances can be seen in *Pobre Rico* and other late transition teleseries with regard to thematic areas, especially challenging simple narratives of apoliticism and class-based determinism, the progressive nature of the
national channel’s social narrative has its limitations and shortcomings. Though Chile is not a country in which a significant portion of the population is of indigenous origin, nor is indigeneity a very significant part of the nationalist narrative of Chile, the country does have a large mixed racial presence and immigrant influence from countries both within Latin America and beyond, including Germany and several Asian countries. Whether marginalized in society or not, these minority voices do not feature with any prominence in present-day Chilean teleseries. The cast of characters on both TVN and other networks in Chile is almost entirely homogeneous racially, despite the narratives of diversity and difference many characters might purport to represent. While plurality can be seen in a series like *Pobre Rico* on the levels of social class and socioeconomic status, minority populations based on race, sexual orientation and other social distinctions are markedly excluded. Aside from the plain fact that the Chilean body of television actors is largely composed of mostly wealthy, white Chileans of European descent, historical international conflicts have led to discourses of severe racial bias in Chile and contributed to the favoring of certain immigrant populations and exclusion or marginalization of others. One of the most influential racial dynamics and discourses involves the tense history of relations between Chile and Peru, dating back to the War of the Pacific and up through the present-day Maritime dispute. Peruvian immigrants are often viewed and treated as racial and social inferiors, whereas European and North American immigrants, for example, are exalted in the social, cultural and sometimes even political spheres.

This study has engaged significantly with one of the most influential studies of Chilean television and cinema of the transition period, *Melodrama, Sujetividad e Historia en el Cine y Television Chilenos de los 90*, produced by researchers Pablo Corro, Valerio
Fuenzalida and Constanza Mujica of the Universidad Católica in Santiago. Their work explores a decade of transformations in historical reflexivity and intermediality, and their relation to socio-cultural, economic and political shifts during what I have named the first decade of transition. With a narrowed focus on fictional television series of the national channel, this work has sought to elaborate and engage with the arguments presented in *Melodrama* and other cultural studies over a period that extends to the current moment in the narrative of Chilean television. *Melodrama* provided useful historical context that came to bear significantly on my analysis of not only television shows of the 1990s, but also those produced during the dictatorship and after the first decade of transition, continuing into the first and beginning of the second decades of the new millennium.

Through my own research, I have examined evolving social and political trends, patterns and dynamics in Chilean society, principally neoliberal economic development, globalization-oriented capitalism, political reform, socioeconomic classification, spatial segregation, migration trends and social marginalization, to analyze how these social realities relate to the issue of class and class representation in the teleserie as a mediated cultural influence. This study’s specific focus on teleseries produced by the state-owned and independently financed national channel, TVN, whose proclaimed role following the 1992 reform of its mission is to represent diversity, plurality and culture of Chile, has allowed for more direct correlation and analysis of the genre’s thematic evolution as it parallels and confronts the ongoing evolutions in Chile’s social and political landscape. This analytical study has examined thematic progression and “apertura” in the portrayal of socioeconomic groups in teleseries of the transition periods, as well as the apertura’s limitations, arguing that changes in the official classification of these groups, the
influence of market logic and dominant depoliticized notions of popular culture and the lower class, especially within the urban context, have influenced the manner in which distinct cultural and socioeconomic groups are represented in Chile’s teleseries.

REFERENCES


Dockemdorff, Eduardo, Rodriguez, Alfredo and Winchester, Lucy. “Santiago de Chile:


Mazziotti, Nora. La industria de la telenovela: La producción de ficción en América


