



QUEERING THE CHILEAN WAY

Cultures of Exceptionalism and
Sexual Dissidence, 1965–2015

CARL FISCHER

[NEW DIRECTIONS IN LATINO AMERICAN CULTURES]



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Introduction

“THE CHILEAN WAY”: EXCEPTIONALISM AS EXCLUSION

In 2010, after then-president of Chile Sebastián Piñera oversaw the daring and ultimately successful rescue of 33 miners trapped underground, he triumphantly used an English-language phrase to invoke the rescue, both at home and abroad: it was proof of the “Chilean way” of doing things. The “Chilean way” has become, in fact, a semi-official slogan aimed at showing off Chile’s prosperity (which, as Piñera pointed out, had made it possible for the country to harness the resources for the rescue) to the world in general, and to potential foreign investors in particular.¹ The rescue of the miners, a news story that riveted a billion people around the world, became the latest platform for Chile to set itself apart from its supposedly unstable, chaotic Latin American neighbors as uniquely affluent, humane, and prudent. The attention paid in media spheres to Chile’s exceptional economic success was matched by that received by the workers and functionaries involved in the rescue; indeed, inherent to the economic calculus of the “Chilean way” were its protagonists’ performances of heterosexual masculinity. Mining Minister Laurence Golborne was glowingly portrayed (initially, at least) as a family man who had made the personal sacrifice to leave an extremely lucrative job as manager of a retail holding company and work in public service. The miners’ masculinity was also the subject of media attention: Héctor Tobar, author of *Deep Down Dark* (2014)—an account of the mining accident and subsequent rescue—stated in an interview that the

miners' jobs "were dangerous, but also very fulfilling for them, because in Chile, being a miner is sort of like being a man."² Gleeful accounts of the heterosexual exploits of the miners—including Yonni Barros, whose wife and girlfriend were portrayed in Patricia Riggen's 2015 film *The 33*, based on Tobar's book, as fighting over their man while waiting for him to emerge on the surface—figured them as model workers and healthy (if roguish) machos. Film heartthrob Antonio Banderas' role as the miners' leader further displaced their precarious, dangerous labor into the realm of spectacle. The queer subjects who helped make the rescue possible—such as Pedro Rivero, a *travesti* leading the first rescue team to arrive on the scene of the accident (Tobar 79)—were relegated to obscurity.³ Piñera's rhetoric, and those it encompassed and excluded, is just one of many examples of how Chile's exceptional economic success has been tied, in the country's public discourse, to masculine, heteronormative sexual praxis.

I use the term "exceptionalism" here as a productively contradictory way to think about how certain states, persons, cultural objects, and commodities set themselves *apart* as one-of-a-kind and yet, at the same time, are firmly situated *within* a particular group of peers. Crowded fields of contenders—countries vying for foreign investment, applicants competing for jobs, authors and filmmakers seeking audiences, and products looking for consumers—often make use of the rhetoric of exceptionalism to highlight their comparative advantage in relation to others. In this way, they make themselves intelligible and attractive to whoever is looking for the "best"—even if, as a paradoxical consequence of this, they once again find themselves indistinguishable from others who are also proclaiming their superiority. The rhetoric of the superlative, the unprecedented, and the extraordinary remains a daily fact of life under regimes of capital that force their subjects to compete amongst themselves for notoriety, visibility, and prominence; however, there are political, as well as economic, motives to set oneself apart as exceptional. Indeed, traces of exceptionalism can be found in the nationalist discourses of most countries, including the USA, as American Studies scholars such as Daniel Rodgers (2004), Jasbir Puar (2007), and Donald Pease (2009) have suggested. Since the nineteenth century, Americans imagined that their country was "a chosen land, inherently and irrevocably, with a world-historical covenant and mission that set it apart from the rest of the world," depending "on an imagined 'elsewhere'" (Rodgers 23–24). Just as New England was, for John Winthrop, a "city upon a hill" (Rodgers 24), Chileans, too, have conceived of their

exceptionalism in spatial terms. In a text seminal to Chilean nationalist discourse, Benjamín Subercaseaux (1941) elegized how the country's "loca geografía" set it apart from what lay beyond its dramatic borders, which comprised the vast Pacific, the bone-dry Atacama Desert, the towering Andes, and the hostile Antarctic. Yet this apartness was always in implicit comparison with other places whose geography is presumably more "sane" (and therefore less notable).

Particularly over the last 50 years—the scope of this study—Chile has conceived of itself as apart from, and unique in, the world, in an economic and political sense as well as a geographic one. Official discourse held up the country's 1966 agrarian reform as the one in Latin America that most closely followed US Alliance for Progress directives; Salvador Allende's government (1970–1973) was the world's only socialist democracy; and Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship (1973–1990) stood out as much for its orthodox adaptation of neoliberal structural reforms as for its murderous efficiency. Later, postdictatorship political leaders took over the economy and called it an even more shining example: they had balanced neoliberalism with increasing social protections and democracy, while reckoning with the dictatorship's violent past—albeit always "en la medida de lo posible," as former President Patricio Aylwin famously said.⁴ Michelle Bachelet, elected in 2006 (and again in 2014), has been figured as a model for new kinds of female participation in the world's highest spheres of power. The word *modelo* in Chile, on its own, continues to be used metonymically to describe the country's entire political and economic system⁵; in recent years, the country's politicians have attacked their opponents by accusing them of undermining Chile's "exceptional" economic image.⁶ Despite drastic economic and political changes, then, Chile has continuously projected itself in the world as an exceptional specimen of whatever type of economy it has at the time.

The present study will critique Chilean economic exceptionalism as an inherently violent phenomenon that works not only to make the material exploitation upon which it often depends invisible, but also to exclude those subjects deemed unworthy to partake in its apparent success. These erasures are enacted through the "state of exception," a phenomenon in which a sovereign government temporarily suspends "constitutional procedures and individual guarantees," deploying "repressive measures" in order to sustain its power (Loveman 1993: 12). This idea, first coined by the German philosopher Carl Schmitt (1922) to justify lawmaking outside of democratic institutions in Weimar Germany, has been little explored a

propos of Chile, although it has been amply theorized. As Puar has shown, US exceptionalism can only operate under some degree of a state of exception, so that when the country suspends the constitutional rights of its citizens, by, for example, summarily executing them with drone strikes,⁷ it is a way to “restore, protect, and maintain ... the normative ordering that then allows the United States to hail its purported universality. [...] State of exception discourses rationalize egregious violence in the name of the preservation of a way of life and those privileged to live it” (8–9). The USA justified its neocolonial interventions abroad—including its well-documented support for the military coup that overthrew Allende⁸—by proclaiming its status as “the norm that others ought to envy” (Rodgers 25). In effect, its conviction that other countries *should* be like it justified its interventions abroad to make it so that other countries *were* like it. What Pease calls exceptionalist fantasy, then, provides its American adherents “with the psychosocial structures that permitted them to ignore the state’s exceptions” (12) and thus to justify and excuse many of the violent, illegal acts it has committed.

In Chile, states of exception have been a way of life since the inception of the republic, and are thus key to understanding its rhetoric of exceptionalism. The country’s 1833 constitution—drafted by the authoritarian “ministerial dictator” Diego Portales (Loveman 1993: 329) and marking the “final consolidation” of the country’s long, chaotic process of independence from Spain—concentrated power into very few hands. This meant that the country’s leaders “perfectly and frequently implemented the regimes of exception that became familiar to other Spanish Americans in the nineteenth century” (Loveman 1993: 315), by taking unilateral control of the different apparatuses of nominally democratic government whenever it was convenient.⁹ Moreover, this dependence on the state of exception became an inherent part of the country’s exceptionalism: Chile “became the envy of other Spanish American nations” thanks to its frequent suspensions of democracy. In fact, those suspensions allowed Chile to avoid “the caudillismo, fragmentation, and disorder characteristic of the region” (Loveman 1993: 314), which permitted the country to conceive of itself as so particularly stable, politically speaking. But there have been other instances of Chilean exceptionalism being propped up by the state of exception throughout its republican history. Ericka Beckman (2009) points out how the Chilean state’s sense of nationalist superiority stemmed from the way in which it situated its role in the War of the Pacific

(1879–1883) as a righteous struggle against the supposedly “inferior” races of Peru and Bolivia—an “assertion of Chilean racial superiority ... foundational to discourses of Chilean particularity as a ‘white’ and modern country in Latin America” (Beckman 74). This gave the state grounds to justify its annexation of the lands (and suspension of the rights) of the Mapuche and Rapa Nui people, in a Chilean iteration of “manifest destiny” (Beckman 74). Portales and Schmitt’s authoritarian ideals were of great inspiration, meanwhile, to Augusto Pinochet and other ideologues of the 1973 military coup like Jaime Guzmán,¹⁰ as Renato Cristi (2011) shows. Guzmán’s creation of Chile’s 1980 constitution, which remains in place to this day, was borne out of a state of exception that resulted from the overthrow of the Allende government: a rupture of the established order, putatively (and paradoxically) meant to save that order. This coup, wrought (in part) to shore up Chile’s “exceptionally” capitalist credentials, had the effect of annihilating almost 3000 people identified with the Left, and torturing and exiling many others. In the twenty-first century, the same discourse of Chileans as more “‘white’, ‘virile’ and ‘civilized’” than their neighbors has been deployed against “Peruvians [who] emigrated in large numbers to Chile as maids and service workers” (Beckman 84, 87).¹¹ Chile’s contemporary discourse of national superiority and prosperity is made possible by laws that simultaneously single out certain workers for extra scrutiny and relax labor legislation when the need for foreign labor arises—a contemporary iteration of the state of exception.¹² These authoritarian, exclusive ideals thus lie at the heart of how official Chilean political and economic institutions conceive of themselves as exceptional.

QUEERNESS AND THE RE/PRODUCTION OF EXCEPTIONALISM

Chile’s supposedly exceptional economic and political status—particularly since 1965—rests not only upon the states of exception that silenced dissent and enabled financial and labor exploitation; it is constructed, often quite aggressively, in tandem with models of masculine, heterosexual comportment. It hinges upon heterosexual families and even dynasties—almost always headed by men with recognizably “illustrious” last names like Angelini, Calderón, Yarur, Matte, Luksic, and Solari¹³—whose “patrimony” is safely couched within what Judith Butler (1990) called the “heterosexual matrix” (7).¹⁴ The repression inherent to Chile’s

exceptionalism has often been deployed specifically to protect the interests of these families. This is a phenomenon that has been going on since the beginning of the republic, as Gabriel Salazar's (2002) discussion of the nineteenth century "patriarcado mercantil"—men whose fortunes increased upon their marriage to women from equally prosperous families, and whose identities as men were interrelated to their roles as providers for their children and wives (18)—shows. In this way, those who control the law ensure that the symbolic capital of ideology and the very tangible capital of inheritance are passed from generation to generation within the context of heterosexual family life. We can see why queerness is figured as so threatening to the institutions that uphold Chilean exceptionalism when Lee Edelman (2004) shows how the queer—literally defined in his text as a practitioner of exclusively non-reproductive sexual acts—is positioned in art and literature as the antithesis not only of heterosexual reproduction, but also of any societal attempt "to *affirm* a structure, to *authenticate* social order, which it then intends to transmit to the future in the form of its inner Child" (3, emphasis in original). Participation in the practice of reproductive sexuality is almost always the principal factor through which the heterosexual masculinity required to be the protagonist of Chilean exceptionalism is represented and categorized in the country's official discourse—a phenomenon very much in keeping with overall global trends.¹⁵ Such subjects are constructed as "sexually exceptional"—that is, particularly able to embody official political and economic aims, thanks to their embrace of heteronormative masculinity. Sexual exceptionalism is a term coined by Puar, who, working from the supposition "that heterosexuality is a necessary constitutive factor of national identity," points out how the exceptionalism driving current US interventions in the Middle East is based not only on the state of exception, but also on "a praxis of sexual othering ... vis-à-vis Orientalist constructions of 'Muslim sexuality'" (4).¹⁶

The queer refusal to embrace normative, reproductive heterosexuality threatens those institutions—such as the mercantile patriarchy, the military, the church, and political groups (on the Left and the Right alike, it should be said)—that enact and enforce oppressive laws to protect a nameless but constantly invoked Child¹⁷ who would perpetuate Chilean exceptionalism into the future. This queerness, as represented in the country's art and literature, comes in many permutations at different times—less conventionally cisgender men, women who embrace certain tenets of feminism, and LGBT subjects, among others—but what all these permutations share is the potential to bring about economic and political harm

to Chile's exceptionalism. Subjects that threaten the country's official discourse of exceptionalism are marginalized or even marked for death, in extrajudicial mechanisms invented by the mercantile patriarchy and the other aforementioned institutions. When members of such institutions have needed to stay in power, they have deviated from—or even suspended—the letter of the law to make it conform to their contingent needs, in ways reminiscent of Giorgio Agamben's (2005) interpretation of the state of exception. Positing that the state of exception has to do with the ever-shifting borderline between how the law is theorized (that is, how constitutions *intend* it to be practiced) and how the law is actually implemented and deployed (often in “exceptional” ways unforeseen by those constitutions), Agamben shows how unwritten (though very real and practical) shifts in the interpretation and implementation of the law often have the effect of repressing certain ideas and deeming certain subjects worthy of ostracism or eradication. In Chile, heterosexual women, too, are often circumscribed to domestic, or even (in the words of Jaime Guzmán) “spiritual” roles, which restrict their ability to actively participate in the management of labor and capital. The rhetoric of exceptionalism is similar, in this sense, to the discourse of homophobia: the desire to *distinguish oneself* from, and exert power over, queer subjects at the heart of homophobia is often imbricated in the imposition of heterosexual *conformity and normativity*.

The shifting boundaries of the law that enable those invested in Chile's exceptionalism to erase and disavow queer subjects and economic exploitation under the state of exception can also create enclaves for sexual dissidence, however. Indeed, the gray area between the letter of the law and its implementation allows for the same sorts of identity-based dissidence and indecipherability that queerness does. Ever since Foucault (1978), arguing against the so-called repressive hypothesis, proposed that rather than containing or censoring sex—particularly in its more “deviant” forms—societies tend to render it as something to be “taken charge of, tracked down as it were, by a discourse that aimed to allow it no obscurity, no respite” (20), queer theory and cultural production have focused on subjects whose sexual identities defy society's “incitement to discourse” (Foucault 17) on sexuality by refusing to be “captured” into discursive categories that might hold them to unjust surveillance.¹⁸ Given that Chilean exceptionalism is a phenomenon rhetorically linked to economic notoriety (if not always labor exploitation, at least during the Allende years) and sexual exceptionalism, sexually

dissident subjects can disrupt the heterosexual lineages that lend those institutions the authority to enforce their economic and political power. By effacing themselves and evading the rhetoric of spectacle and prominence that surround those subjects deemed “sexually exceptional,” or—alternatively—by inserting their sometimes-inscrutable, illogical bodies into narratives invested in the easily explainable “logic” of capital, queer subjects defy the reproductively oriented genealogies of exceptionalism in Chile. They thus challenge its unwritten but *de facto* exclusions with their own evasive, or interruptive, practices. Queering “the Chilean way” thus involves disrupting the facile correspondence between the country’s exceptionalistic economic rhetoric and the heterosexual, conventionally masculine, reproductive subjects in which that rhetoric is often embodied. Making use of the very same discursive and categorical ambiguities the state of exception uses, queer subjects dodge the very intelligibility upon which exceptionalism depends to make certain persons, countries, and products “stand out” among others.

Indeed, an important cross-section of Chilean cultural production has deployed queer subjects to question Chile’s insistence on itself as economically exceptional. A number of scholars and artists have pointed this out in interesting, productive ways,¹⁹ although a systematic, historiographical claim about a gender-based critique of Chilean exceptionalism over time has not, until now, been made. Pedro Lemebel, for example—whose work I will be reading throughout this volume not only as an object of theory, but also as a theoretical polemic in itself—parodied the globalizing pretensions of Piñera’s discourse of prosperity: “Pura buena onda ofrece usted, don Piñi, como si estuviera conquistando al populacho con maní. Nada más, el resto pura plata, empachado de *money*, quiere pasar a la posteridad solo por eso” (2012: 189, emphasis added). Critiquing here both Piñera’s obsession with legacy and posterity, as well as his ready deployment of the often-Anglicized parlance of transnational capital—both on high display throughout the rescue of the 33 miners—Lemebel undermined the elitist discourse of Chilean exceptionalism in just a few sentences, and did so from an enunciative position of queerness that consistently evaded clear political and economic categories.

Looking beyond Lemebel, the reader can find a 50-year-long archive of cultural production that questions narratives of economic exceptionalism and advocates for greater economic and sexual inclusiveness. The sort of economic “modernity” to which Chile aspired in the late 1960s, for example, is one such narrative that imagines a heterosexual head-of-household

as its ideal figure—perfectly positioned as the protagonist of the agrarian reform that would more widely distribute prosperity and most effectively contain any sort of Cuban-style revolution, as Heidi Tinsman (2002) has written. This left little room for any who would defy such an ideal, and yet José Donoso’s unforgettable character la Manuela, in his 1966 novel *El lugar sin límites*, exposed the sexism and heterosexism within which Chile’s adherence to the Alliance for Progress-driven agrarian reform was inscribed. Meanwhile, to be an ideal (male) worker, student, or revolutionary in the conventional narrative of the Unidad Popular (UP) government meant acquiescing to a very reduced subset of heterosexual praxes, including that of “seducing” women to sympathize with the UP cause. Yet the masculinist assumptions underlying the utopian visions of equality and socialism in nostalgic artistic works created after the fall of the UP can be easily identified and critiqued—as Patricio Guzmán himself once admitted in an interview about his important documentary *La batalla de Chile*.²⁰ After the fall of the UP, the dictatorship’s authoritarian, family-oriented narrative for Chile clashed with its insistence on radical, neoliberal economic openness that brought a number of new, queer ideas into the country—such as the ones that inspired the visual artist Carlos Leppe, whose performances destabilized the heteropatriarchal narratives underpinning both the economic exceptionalism and the state of exception of the dictatorship.

Following the dictatorship, Chile’s “disciplined” transition to democracy—balancing an adherence to neoliberalism with increased social protection—tended to silence voices demanding more radical gestures of remembrance and reparation, including those who wanted to break with the neoliberal altogether, such as Tomás Moulián (2002). But the indelibly queer legacies left by artists and writers in this period, such as the performance artist Lorenza Böttner, can open up new forms of remembrance, while also exposing the heteronormative assumptions made even by those making the case for forms of leftism more radical than those offered by the *Concertación*. Finally, Bachelet has had to confront the masculinist nature of this system several times while in office—such as when she proposed a gender-balanced cabinet in 2006—but her insistence on greater *gender* equality has occasionally run into tension with hopes in the populace for greater economic, social, sexual, and ethnic equality, in a society so segmented and classist. In this sense, queer writers such as Constanza Álvarez (2014) shift our focus onto the kinds of “sexual dissidence” that female bodies can perform when taking exception to the country’s spheres of power. Attempts to queer

Chilean exceptionalism thus form an alternative artistic legacy—like that theorized by José Muñoz (2009)—with identifiable traits that have developed and passed on from generation to generation, even though they take place outside of the logic of heteronormative reproduction.²¹

Accordingly, I submit that if Chile is to serve as a transnational model, it need not necessarily be for economic policymaking, but rather for how to deploy queerness to question non-inclusive notions of economic exceptionalism. I propose to trace a genealogy of Chilean artistic, cinematic, and literary forms which systematically expose, over the span of 50 years, the seemingly fixed discursive models of heterosexual masculinity at the heart of Chilean exceptionalism as actually quite mutable and artificial.²² In this sense, I follow a disciplinary tradition, in queer studies, of critiquing the underlying presumptions of heterosexuality often at the base of large, societal metanarratives.²³ Beyond that, however, I will show how the interrogation and evasion of masculine heteronormativity by queer Chilean artists and writers are inseparable from interrogations of other narratives, long taken for granted, of Chile as an economic model. Although such narratives may be held up as models to be copied by other countries at different historical junctures, they are no more “prediscursive” than the performances of heterosexual masculinity of those conceived as their ideal protagonists. I will thus be using the term “queer”—whether as a verb, noun, or adjective—to evoke any kind of sexual difference aimed at disrupting the “reproduction” of larger narratives of exceptionalism. I will show that in Chilean cultural production, queer subjects—apart from, and yet implicitly compared against, those subjects whose aims are allied with official economic and political discourse—are finding new ways to think about what exceptionalism is, and in the process are reappropriating discourses of sexual exceptionalism for their own purposes. Queerness, in the end, is a phenomenon as evasive of the letter of the law as the state of exception is, and accordingly, it can undermine Chilean exceptionalism in much the same way that the latter must depend on the state of exception for its force.

SITUATING AND HISTORICIZING QUEERNESS AND THE CHILEAN WAY

Just as Rodgers proposes, in the US context, that the “alternative to exceptionalist history begins with recognizing the ... slippage ... between the categories of ‘here’ and ‘elsewhere’” (30), one way to undo

Chile's sexual, political, and economic exceptionalism is to think about the slippages that occur when we think about Chile transnationally. This thinking has implications for how we situate Chilean exceptionalism within global dynamics of nationalism and capital flow, how we situate queer Chilean cultural production within global currents of gender studies, and how we historicize the exclusions inherent to Chilean exceptionalism. A closer look at the ways in which this official discourse is queered means paying attention to the historical, economic, political, and gender ambiguities this process of queering ends up teasing out.

Speaking of economic exceptionalism: to what extent is Chile's rhetoric of itself as an economic model to others imbricated in its exceptional ability to assimilate foreign economic models? In a seemingly endless feedback loop, Chile is simultaneously positioned as both a neoliberal paradigm (under dictatorship) that Reaganite and Thatcherist economic policies in the metropolitan North Atlantic later followed, and as a "good student" that has rapidly assimilated those policies (first modeled by the North Atlantic and elsewhere). Although author and activist Naomi Klein (2007) derisively points out how the country is "still held up by free-market enthusiasts as proof that Friedmanism"—that is, a form of neoliberal economic management conceived at the University of Chicago—"still works" (103), in recent years the country has served as a signpost for what supposedly more "developed" countries like the USA might become. Many of the privatizations, public sector reductions, expansions of for-profit schools and colleges, and de-industrialization currently being discussed and/or implemented in the USA have already been undertaken by Chile.²⁴ Since nationalistic and sexual exceptionalism depend on an implied "other" to sustain themselves, questioning the parameters of Chilean exceptionalism means questioning those countries, subjects, and economic systems against which it is defined. I will thus maneuver within the "slippages" mentioned by Rodgers, which exist not only between the local and the global aspects of exceptionalism, but also between the global and local aspects of queer critiques of that exceptionalism, as practiced in Chile. This slippage is one example of how the ambiguities inherent to the state of exception—whose repression Chilean exceptionalism depends upon, as I have argued—can be used to the advantage of sexually dissident subjects.

As for the potential pitfalls of queering Chilean cultural production, given the inaccuracies and presuppositions—as well as the revelations and elucidations—that take place when poststructuralist theory (both feminist and queer) is put into practice in (or, in worst-case scenarios,

simply “applied” to) the postcolonial context of Latin America, it is worth taking a second look at the cultural particularities of *lo queer* in Chile. The place of Chilean and Latin American cultural production in transnational “genealogies” of feminist and queer theory has been amply debated,²⁵ and it remains fertile territory for further discussion. Nelly Richard (2008), for example, has discussed Latin American feminist critiques that the “experiences” of Latin American women defy the feminist and queer theories of the global north, which constitute, for them, an inherently imperialistic enterprise (32–33). This runs the risk, for Richard, of projecting “un imaginario femenino del *cuerpo-naturaleza* que se hace fácilmente cómplice de la concepción metafísica del ser latinoamericano como pureza originaria que emana de un continente virgen” (Richard 2008: 36, emphasis in original): an othering of Latin American culture in general, and of Latin American women in particular. She thus defends the use of feminist theory in the Latin American context, so that “el sujeto-mujer enfrente la tarea crítica de re-articularse *discursivamente* a través de las instituciones de la cultura” (Richard 2008: 36, emphasis in original). The visual artist and theorist Felipe Rivas (2011), meanwhile, who first illustrated his suspicion of North Atlantic queer theory in the form of performance art,²⁶ argues that although the “traspaso disciplinario literal Norte-Sur” of “queerness” should not be uncritically practiced or celebrated, a flat-out rejection of the promises of what he calls *cuir* theory should not fall victim to “un excesivo localismo latinoamericano” (70), either. He thus argues for the idea of *sexual dissidence*, the name of the collective he is loosely affiliated with,²⁷ which claims a number of influences from Chile and around the world, thus diluting the hegemony of North Atlantic queer theory in critiquing politicized forms of sexual difference. In what follows, I am going to use the more localized term “sexual dissidence” and the more globally circulating term “queerness” interchangeably.

Just as a careful inquiry into Chile’s definition of itself as economically exceptional reveals it to be less so than it claims, and a closer examination of the heterosexuality of that exceptionalism reveals its intertwinement with queerness, an inquiry solely focused on Chile’s dictatorship and post-dictatorship era—the period most studied by recent critics²⁸—inevitably reveals the need to historicize these claims beyond that period. This is not only because the dictatorship and its aftermath can be better understood in a broader historical context, but also because it is a way to more accurately

capture the changing, and often ambiguous, ways in which representations of economics and gender have coalesced and come undone in the country's cultural production over time. In this sense, I subscribe to Rubí Carreño's ideas (2009) about how historicizing gender and cultural studies in Chile beyond the period of the dictatorship and postdictatorship has the added advantage of questioning narratives of Latin American cultural production, particularly in the North American academy, that are overly invested in stereotypical conceptions of state violence and other forms of "barbarie" (15). Carreño and other critics working in Chile have made an effort to show that the queer aspects of Chilean cultural production run much further back than previously thought,²⁹ and this is an effort in which I hope to inscribe my own work. The corpus under examination here—documentary subjects, novels, films, plays, and works of performance art—has been assembled for its ability to expose, over a long period of time, how dissident practices of sexuality can expose the inconsistencies in the narratives of Chilean exceptionalism (on the Left and Right), from long before the dictatorship to long afterwards.

While the works I will discuss all come from Chile, this volume is hardly an apology for any sort of national "unity." In fact, many of the works analyzed here were produced outside of Chile—the product of a vibrant diaspora of intellectuals, artists, and writers who found themselves thinking (about) Chile from far away for political, artistic, sexual, economic, or family reasons, and whose geographic and critical distances from their country allowed for particularly sharp observations. These "exiles" extend throughout the period under discussion here: some left before the dictatorship (Donoso), some remained outside the country *until* Allende was deposed (Alberto Fuguet and his family, for instance), and others were part of the huge wave of exiles forced out of the country by the laws of the dictatorship (Jorge Edwards, Patricio Guzmán). Some were relegated to what Michael Lazzara calls "insilio" (2002: 12), producing art within Chile but outside official circles (Carlos Flores, Leppe, Diamela Eltit); others remained outside the country even after it was safe to return (Bolaño); and others still are members of a younger, internationally circulating cohort of Chilean intellectuals, subsidized by Chilean and international grants, who broaden the scope of that which is "Chilean" in new ways (Guillermo Calderón). Others created art from positions that did not fit comfortably into any of the aforementioned categories (Lorenza Böttner). Far from being the single "imagined political community" that

Benedict Anderson theorizes in his definition of the nation (1983: 6), Chile's cultural production over the last 50 years shows the country to be rather more like a patchwork of communities interspersed throughout the globe and in the minds of different artists. Since Chilean exceptionalism has so often been used to bolster nationalistic claims, my critique of that exceptionalism necessarily involves a critique of nationalism through a conception of the country that lies far beyond its "loca geografía." Chile's vibrant artistic corpus has undermined preconceptions of the country as insular and challenged the idea of the nation as the central axis around which artistic production can be organized. I will thus focus on its rhetoric of *economic* exceptionalism, as opposed to other studies that link sexuality and the national,³⁰ because in this age of transnationally circulating capital, Chile's neoliberal economic "success" is often at the heart of its transnational narrative of exceptionalism.

Although exceptionalism is often complicit with imperialist discourse, it also enables the circulation of Chilean cultural production in the world. In this sense, Jacqueline Loss' discussion of cosmopolitanism (2005) is key to understanding exceptionalism. Loss understands cosmopolitanism as a discourse deployed by Latin American cultural actors to negotiate the standing of cultural products (their own and others') in local and global contexts to claim (and dissent from) affiliations to multiple spheres of exchange, canonicity, and authority (2–3, 10).³¹ Just as the term *cosmopolitismo* has been invoked to describe internationally circulating Latin American cultural products as alternately selling out to the imperial gaze and resisting it (Loss 5), the rhetoric of exceptionalism indicates a logic of competitiveness that has long been key to capital, even as it was also deployed in service to the Chilean Left.³² Chilean exceptionalism is thus a productive way to place Chilean cultural production into dialogue with globally circulating currents of ideas: being exceptional in the world, whether as a historical moment, as a work of art, as an economic system, or simply as a person, often also means being intelligible to an international audience. In this sense, when I propose an archive of works representing queer figures that use the ambiguities of the state of exception to muddle the projection of nationalist narratives of Chilean economic exceptionalism, I leave the possibility open for those figures to make themselves uniquely intelligible, globally speaking.

AN ORGANIZATIONAL SCHEMATIC

Chapter 2, “The Monstrous Masculinities of Chile’s Agrarian Reform, 1965–1970,” opens in 1965 because around that time, a number of factors coalesced to make Chile’s economy and cultural production more outward looking. First, implementation of the agrarian reform and modernization directives of the Alliance for Progress program came soon after the election of Eduardo Frei Montalva to the presidency, and Chile quickly became a model of good practices for the program’s execution throughout the region. At the same time, José Donoso and Miguel Littin both created cultural artifacts that would make waves in cosmopolitan circles all over the world. Donoso’s two novels, *El lugar sin límites* (1966) and *El obsceno pájaro de la noche* (1970), and Littin’s film, *El chacal de Nahueltoro* (1969), are at the center of this second chapter for several reasons. Theirs were the first pieces of Chilean cultural production to widely circulate abroad that were not from the genre of poetry: although Gabriela Mistral, Vicente Huidobro, and Pablo Neruda had made Chilean literature renowned throughout the world, Donoso and Littin were cosmopolitan pioneers in new ways—the former as part of the “Boom,” and the latter in sync with the latest cinematic trends from Europe and Brazil, such as *cinema novo*, neorealism, and the *nouvelle vague*. This recognition abroad—which gave their work added cachet within Chile, of course—provided the cultural counterpart to Chile’s newly prominent place in world economic affairs. Their work also showed a new awareness of more cosmopolitan gender norms as well, with characters that exemplified “monstrous” (in the sense conveyed by Judith (Jack) Halberstam (1995) and Michel Foucault (2003)) performances of masculinity that queered ideas about normative, biological reproductive practices. This chapter, then, draws upon and critiques Marshall Berman’s ideas about the contradictions of “modernity” to draw parallels between these literary and cinematic models of queerness and the rise of the Chilean economy as a new hemispheric paragon of good practice and modernization.

Chapter 3, “The Exceptional Art of Gendered Utopias, 1970–1973,” is situated in the era of the UP government, when Salvador Allende took office and sought to further socialize the means of production, nationalize the country’s natural resources, and accelerate the agrarian reform process. While all of the works discussed in this chapter are *about* this period (and some were *created* during it), however, they were all made public after it was over—in one case, fairly long after. The works associated with

this highly politicized—even utopian, as Fredric Jameson (2004) would put it—era all directly confront the historical legacy of the UP, but with a historical distance that allows for clearer analysis, as Beatriz Sarlo (2004) points out. Meanwhile, reading works that had taken this temporal distance allows me to examine and critique idealized cultural perceptions of the UP, which seem to become more frequent (and more nostalgic, in the sense of the term conveyed by Svetlana Boym (2001)) as time goes on. *La batalla de Chile*, the documentary by Patricio Guzmán (1975–1979), *Persona non grata*, Jorge Edwards’ 1974 memoir, and “La noche de los visones,” a chronicle from Pedro Lemebel’s 1996 collection *Loco afán*, all look backward with nostalgia on an era long gone. Indeed, in the case of Guzmán, they even shaped that era through editing and montage. Yet they also look forward to a utopia (or dystopia) yet-to-be, examining the UP as an exceptional economic “model” that could have been, alongside different “models” of masculinities that came with those futures and pasts. These models include the hierarchical dystopia of military discipline portrayed by Edwards, the utopian preenings of the *locas* that pervade Lemebel’s work, and the revolutionary rhetoric and action of the *guerrilleros* and workers filmed by Guzmán.

In Chap. 4, “Queering the State of Exception, 1973–1989,” I argue that the Pinochet dictatorship was able to portray itself as economically exceptional and politically dominant, thanks to the “state of exception”: its *interruption* of democracy was couched, paradoxically, in the *perpetuation* of conservative societal conventions, particularly the *preservation* of the heterosexual family. Those heterosexual families—including Pinochet’s specifically—were then positioned as the ideal protagonists of the neoliberal reforms that ensued, such that *paseos familiares* in amply-stocked supermarkets were discursively positioned as the highest expression of Chilean *exitismo*. However, for thinkers like Willy Thayer (2006), the manipulation of teleologies inherent to the state of exception made for a simplistically forward-looking vision of time, which allowed artists to take advantage of other loopholes and instabilities in the dictatorship’s discourse, particularly those related to reproduction, both artistic and sexual. The performance art of Carlos Leppe (1974–1981), Carlos Flores’ 1984 documentary *El Charles Bronson chileno*, and Alberto Fuguet’s first novel (originally published in serial form) *La azarosa y sobreexpuesta vida de Enrique Alekán* (1990) all use queer forms of masculinity to contest the heterosexual, reproductive terms within which the state of exception was imposed. Their work—produced within the country, not in

exile—comprised novel, nuanced ways of balancing non-normative gender performance with authoritarianism.

Chapter 5, “Politicizing the *Loca* Body After the Dictatorship, 1990–2005,” intervenes in debates about the legacy of the dictatorship in the 15 years after it ended, which often took the form of questioning whether Chile’s neoliberal economy—which persisted even after the dictatorship that had imposed it was defeated—was, in fact, exceptional. Much of Chilean cultural criticism on the Left worked under the sign of the term *postdictatorship* in order to question this exceptionalism, focusing on the traces of Chile’s defeated leftist past (Avelar). However, I ask whether some postdictatorship criticism has performed its own form of exceptionalism by excluding certain queer experiences of the atrocities of the 1970s and 1980s. It is for this reason that I turn in this chapter to the figure of the *loca*, who can critique monolithic political and economic examinations of literary and cultural production, both official and unofficial—those that promote Chile’s exceptional neoliberal economic success, and those that deconstruct that exceptionalism—through their enactment of an evasion, albeit a selective one, of political categories. By examining an artistic corpus of *locas* who are occasionally unpalatable, for different reasons, to those on Chile’s Left and Right, I investigate the evasive relationship that exists between those figures and the political ideologies that constantly seek to place them under surveillance within restrictive canons. I begin by briefly discussing the work of Pablo Simonetti, whose short story collection *Vidas vulnerables* (1999) represents very few *locas*, offering instead a homonormative narrative of the gay experience in Chile that whitewashes queer militancy and proposes a total complicity with the reigning neoliberal regime. I then return to the work of Lemebel, whose collection of chronicles *Loco afán* (1996) evades and nuances the postdictatorship critical agenda of the Left by discussing the diverging perspectives of the *locas* that the Left has occasionally tried to claim for its ranks (or denied, as necessary). Finally, I conclude by returning to the Chilean diaspora, with a remarkable series of stories about the Chilean-German performance artist Lorenza Böttner, reconstructed from *Loco afán*, Bolaño’s novel *Estrella distante* (1996), and a number of visual archives. Serving as a reminder (however inscrutable) of the potential havoc that politicizing the queer body can wreak, Lorenza encapsulates the ability of the *loca* to evade those discourses, and exemplifies the imperative to think about how debates about Chilean exceptionalism can look beyond the lexicon of the “post” and ahead to the future.

Chapter 6, “Exceptionalism, the Female Body, and the Public Sphere in the Bachelet Era, 2006–2015,” focuses on the present in Chile, marked by the two elections, in 2006 and 2014, of Michelle Bachelet. Bachelet, an avowed feminist, ran on a socialist platform, and in doing so she raised the possibility of reimagining the intractable imbrication of the country’s discourse of economic exceptionalism in male, heterosexual praxis; however, the question of whether this gendered change would involve greater *economic* equality remains open. I argue that Bachelet functions metonymically in debates about the female body (politic) currently underway in Chile: does feminism today involve joining the spheres of power, or dissenting entirely from them? Moreover, can women aspire to embody the idealized subjects of Chile’s economic exceptionalism—long a masculinized phenomenon—or should they take exception to it through practices of sexual dissidence? I read into a literary archive from this period that focuses on the female body (Bachelet’s and others’) in order to ask whether the liberal inclusion of women that Bachelet has proposed is indeed desirable, or whether it is better to focus on the new spaces her moderate discourse of inclusion has opened up in Chile for other excluded groups, such as students, indigenous people, and LGBT citizens whose protests have become increasingly vociferous and visible. Accordingly, Eltit’s novel *Impuesto a la carne* (2010) meditates on the political and historical narratives of Chile’s bicentennial, including its masculinist exceptionalism, all from the perspective of two women protagonists confined to a hospital—hardly a coincidence considering Bachelet’s long career in public health. Guillermo Calderón’s play *Discurso* (2012), meanwhile, imagines Bachelet giving a hypothetical farewell speech that diverges from the bland, disciplined “discourse” that has characterized her time in office and offers a frank account of her term with none of the taboos surrounding the president—her body, her love life, her past, and her often opaque politics—left unaddressed. In doing so, the play asks whether Bachelet can remain an exceptional figure with whom so many Chileans identify, and what implications that question will have for Chile’s idea of itself as exceptional. The novel/manifesto *La cerda punk* by Constanza Álvarez (2014), meanwhile, calls for a radical break with narratives of feminist inclusion in circles of power.

As this book progresses, readers may get the idea that my compulsion to “queer” the large-scale economic and gender narratives of Chilean history since 1965 is more of a negation than a proposition. By seeking lines of flight from nationalist thought, facile definitions of masculinity

and gender, and unreasonably exclusive economic structures, however, I try not to focus solely on the *deconstructive* powers of non-reproductive sexual praxis. On the contrary, it is my hope to inscribe this volume, chapter by chapter, in the praxis of “reparative hermeneutics” proposed by Muñoz (12) when citing Eve Sedgwick (2003). This is a proposal for an alternative cultural history of Chile that critiques exceptionalism by taking into account, and indeed welcoming, practices of sexual dissidence in all forms. The “Chilean Way”—which, as I argue, has been synonymous for many years now with both heteronormative masculinity and certain forms of economic management—can thus *also* describe a model for how representations of gender in cultural production can interrogate economic preconceptions throughout the world.

NOTES

1. See, for example, <http://www.latercera.com/noticia/opinion/ideas-y-debates/2010/10/895-301780-9-the-chilean-way.shtml>. As Ricardo Lagos writes in his memoir *The Southern Tiger* (2012), a memoir whose title is reflective of the way Chile’s boosters have promoted the country’s neoliberal economic policies “balanced” with a modest social welfare net, “our small, far-flung country at the end of the world, reminds me every day what great hope there is for the progress of humanity” (199). Lagos’ extolment of “the Chilean way—the guiding principles that we follow” (199) is thus part of a long rhetorical tradition of positioning Chile as a monolithic model of economic progress. See also the Briton Neil Davidson’s book of Spanish-language chronicles about Chile, *The Chilean Way* (2010).
2. *Inside the New York Times Book Review* podcast, November 21, 2014.
3. Rivero’s part in the saga of the miners was elided from the mass-marketed film, and mentioned very little in mass-media accounts of the rescue. Tobar’s text refers to him as a “transvestite,” but I have chosen to use the Spanish word *travesti* to describe him in order to preserve the cultural specificities of the Spanish term, which does not easily translate into English “transvestite.” More information about the peculiarities of the Chilean *travesti*, and the genealogy of the word itself, can be found in the following chapters.

4. See, for example, <http://www.emol.com/noticias/nacional/2003/07/22/118175/patricio-aylwin-no-hay-justicia-real-sino-en-la-medida-de-lo-posible.html>.
5. The construct of Chile's "model" economy is the central point of debate for the work of a long list of social scientists—some praising the model, and others critiquing it. See, to name only a few, Daniel Wisecarver (1992), Iván Jaksic and Paul Drake (1999), Oscar Muñoz (2007), Luis Larraín (2012), Alberto Mayol (2012), Gonzalo Martner and Eugenio Rivera (2013), and Germán Urrea (2014).
6. See, for example, an August 2015 interview with dictatorship collaborator and prominent Right-wing politician Jovino Novoa, who states that the main flaw of Bachelet's administration, known as the Nueva Mayoría, is that it critiques the neoliberal project that has made Chile supposedly such a global "model": "La Nueva Mayoría sostiene con mucha fuerza que Chile es un proyecto fracasado, que todo lo que pensábamos que era muy bueno, lo hecho en 30 años, esto que el mundo nos miraba con bastante admiración, que todo eso es un fracaso y una mentira porque hay desigualdad. Básicamente tienen centrado ahí su foco. Y como este modelo fracasó, hay que crear uno nuevo. Chile no es obra de una persona o de un grupo, Chile es un proyecto y un esfuerzo colectivo, Y eso significa algo respecto de lo cual nos sentíamos orgullosos muchas personas, desde Ricardo Lagos a la UDI. Y la Nueva Mayoría llegó a decir 'que todo eso era un espejismo, que lo que importaba es que aquí había desigualdad, entonces como hay desigualdad, no importa que haya menos pobres'. Y creo que eso hoy día no representa el sentimiento mayoritario de Chile." For further context, see <http://www.theclinic.cl/2015/08/13/jovino-novoa-y-la-nueva-mayoria-el-temor-es-que-esto-sea-una-especie-de-peronismo/>.
7. The USA justified its 2011 execution by drone of US citizen Anwar al-Awlaki, for example, as governed by the Authorization to Use Military Force (AUMF) Act, passed by the Congress in 2001 to remove constitutional protections on US citizens when they are deemed by "high-level government officials" to be fighting for a "dangerous enemy force." See <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/23/us-justification-drone-killing-american-citizen-awlaki>.
8. For more information about the USA's role in Chile's military coup, see Peter Kornbluh's volume *The Pinochet File* (2004).