

UCLA

Mester

Title

A Family Business: Chile and the Transition to Democracy in Alberto Fuguet's *Se arrienda*

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/03b5j77g>

Journal

Mester, 44(1)

Author

Trautenberg, Ezekiel

Publication Date

2016

DOI

10.5070/M3441037796

Copyright Information

Copyright 2016 by the author(s). All rights reserved unless otherwise indicated. Contact the author(s) for any necessary permissions. Learn more at <https://escholarship.org/terms>

Peer reviewed

A Family Business: Chile and the Transition to Democracy in Alberto Fuguet's *Se arrienda*

Ezekiel Trautenberg
University of California, Los Angeles

Se arrienda depicts a landmark era in Chile's cultural, economic, political, and social history: the Transition to Democracy (1988-2005). This period begins with the "No" campaign's victory in the October 5, 1988 plebiscite and ends with the implementation of a series of wide-ranging constitutional reforms in August 2005. Fuguet's film, which follows the composer Gastón Fernández, unfolds at the beginning and tail end of the Transition to Democracy. *Se arrienda* represents Chile during the Transition through the lenses of culture and economics. The film's dual temporal narrative structure bookending the Transition, polysemous title, and epigraph from L.P. Hartley's novel *The Go-Between* (1953) establish its allegorical qualities. Additionally, three facets epitomize *Se arrienda*'s allegorical representation of Transition-era Chile: the October 14, 1988 Human Rights Now! concert in Mendoza, the relationship between Gastón and his father, and the portrayal of Chernovsky. The film's depiction of the Human Rights Now! concert, held days after the 1988 plebiscite, reflects the collective optimism and solidarity at the beginning of the Transition, as well as the prominence of human rights as a political, social, and cultural issue. Turning to the film's present of 2003, the relationship between Gastón and his father functions as a metaphor of "family capitalism" (Schneider, *Hierarchical Capitalism* 47), while Chernovsky's descent into poverty and isolation reflects the entrenched socio-economic inequality and limited social safety net in Transition-era Chile.

I. ALBERTO FUGUET AND THE TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY

Alberto Fuguet, born 1964, is a prolific author, critic, producer, and filmmaker. Although he is a self-proclaimed cinephile, Fuguet did not begin making films until relatively late in his artistic career.¹ *Se arrienda*, co-written by Fuguet and Francisco Ortega, is Fuguet's first feature-length film.² He has made three additional feature-length fiction films since 2005: *Velódromo* (Chile, 2010), which he co-wrote with René Martín; the Nashville-set *Música campesina* (USA/Chile, 2011); and *Invierno* (Chile, 2015). Fuguet also wrote and directed the essay film *Locaciones: Buscando a Rusty James* (Chile, 2013), a meditation on Francis Ford Coppola's 1983 film *Rumble Fish*.

Chile's Transition to Democracy was a process of political reform, which coincided with the final part of the seventeen-year military dictatorship (1973-1990). The Transition was set in motion by the October 5, 1988 plebiscite, in which a majority of Chileans (55 percent) voted against Augusto Pinochet serving as President for an additional eight-year term.³ General elections in December 1989 and the inauguration of Patricio Aylwin as President in 1990 marked the formal restoration of democracy. The period from 1988 to 2005 was characterized by sustained economic growth; a significant reduction in poverty; the gradual implementation of economic, political, and social reforms; the prosecution of human rights violators under the military dictatorship; and the persistence of authoritarian enclaves. Carlos Huneeus observes that during the Transition Chilean democracy followed “un camino de reforma” (“a path of reform”) within the context of “una triple continuidad” (“a triple continuity”) comprised of the 1980 Constitution, the installation of Pinochet as commander of the army until 1998 and then senator-for-life until 2002, and the preservation of a neoliberal economic model (32). The constitutional reforms enacted under President Ricardo Lagos in August 2005 addressed one of the most significant deficits in the country's democracy—the limited accountability of the armed forces to civilian leadership—by restoring oversight and control of the military to the President and elected officials, thereby ushering in the post-Transition era.⁴

From 1990 to 2005, successive center-left Concertación coalition governments pursued, with varying degrees of success, an economic model that President Patricio Aylwin (1990-1994) labeled “crecimiento con equidad” (“En el acto de aniversario” 109; “growth with equity”). In practice, the growth with equity model, with its

emphasis on free trade and open markets, entailed maintaining the “pragmatic neoliberalism” (Schneider, *Hierarchical Capitalism* 49) instituted by the military government, while at the same time generating economic opportunities and providing increased social support for poor, young, and vulnerable Chileans. Ben Ross Schneider labels the country’s economic model during the Transition “hierarchical capitalism” (4). He notes that this model was first instituted under the military government and broadly maintained during the Transition and post-Transition periods. Schneider identifies four core elements of hierarchical capitalism:

- (1) that Latin America has a distinctive, enduring form of hierarchical capitalism characterized by multinational corporations (MNCs), diversified business groups, low skills, and segmented labor markets; (2) that institutional complementarities knit together features of corporate governance and labor markets and thus contributed to the resiliency of hierarchical capitalism; (3) that elements of the broader political system favor incumbents and insiders who pressed governments to sustain core economic institutions; and (4) that hierarchical capitalism has not generated enough good jobs and equitable development nor is it, on its own, likely to. (4)

As we shall see, *Se arrienda* depicts two key elements of hierarchical capitalism: “family capitalism” (47)—embodied by the relationship between Gastón and his father—and socio-economic inequality—epitomized by the penurious fate of Chernovsky.

Successive Concertación governments implemented economic and social reforms gradually throughout the Transition. In 1990, Aylwin’s government passed a progressive tax reform that significantly increased government revenues, raised the minimum wage, and instituted a labor reform that granted more bargaining power to unions. Reforms by subsequent governments to the education, labor, pension, and health care systems were coupled with significant increases in spending on education and poverty eradication.⁵ Despite these reforms, public social spending as a percentage of GDP declined over the course of the Transition, decreasing from 10.6 percent in 1988 to 8.7 percent in 2005 (OECD, “Social spending”).

Chile experienced strong economic growth during most of the Transition period. From 1990 to 2005, the country's annual GDP growth averaged 5.5 percent, compared to 2.9 percent in the period between 1974 and 1989 under the military dictatorship (Ffrench-Davis 270). This economic expansion was accompanied by a significant decline in poverty rates. The number of Chileans living below the national poverty line fell from 45.1 percent in 1987 to 18.7 percent in 2003 (The World Bank, "Poverty headcount ratio"). However, socio-economic inequality remained high. The country's Gini coefficient, a measure of economic inequality, averaged 53.1 between 1990 and 2005, only slightly lower than its 54.3 Gini coefficient average between 1974 and 1989 (Ffrench-Davis 270).⁶

In addition to these politics of economic continuity and political reform, Concertación governments implemented human rights policies aimed at documenting and prosecuting human rights abuses that occurred during the dictatorship. More than forty thousand people were victims of political and state-sponsored violence during the dictatorship (*Informe de la Comisión Presidencial* 51). The National Commission of Truth and Reconciliation (known as the Rettig Commission) (1990-1991) and the National Commission on Political Imprisonment and Torture (known as the Valech Commission) (2003-2005) were among the most significant and wide-reaching human rights initiatives of the Transition period.⁷ These and subsequent commissions compiled evidence and testimony from victims and perpetrators. Upon the release of the Rettig Commission's report in 1991, President Aylwin declared: "it is Chilean society that is indebted to the victims of human rights violations" ("Justice 'To the Degree Possible'" 530). However, the protracted and ultimately unfinished prosecution of Pinochet for human rights violations—a saga that began in 1998 with his detention in London and ended with his death in 2006—, exemplified the difficulty in pursuing human rights violations. *Se arrienda* portrays the centrality of human rights in Transition-era Chile through the Human Rights Now! concert, an event in which human rights, politics, and culture intersected.

II. NATIONAL ALLEGORY IN *SE ARRIENDA*: HUMAN RIGHTS, FAMILY CAPITALISM, AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY

Se arrienda intertwines a cosmopolitan vision of the world with a national allegory of Chile during the Transition. In incorporating a

socio-economically-oriented national allegory alongside cosmopolitan cultural references—the poster for Brian de Palma’s film *Blow Out* (USA, 1981) hangs on a wall in Gastón’s apartment (seg. 23) and Gastón and his friends discuss Los Prisoneros, Julio Iglesias, and Sting during their conversation in the pizzeria (seg. 6b)—, the film serves as a bridge between the largely allegorical “cinema of the transition” (Kemp 69)⁸ and a cosmopolitan strand of post-Transition cinema.⁹ Fuguet’s film depicts the Transition as a frustrated promise of a more equitable, just, and happy future. In 1988, Gastón (Luciano Cruz-Coke), Chernovsky (Eliana Furman), and their friends embrace the possibilities of the incipient Transition to Democracy; however, their collective optimism gives way to disenchantment as they confront the challenges of adulthood and the limits of the country’s political, economic, and social progress.¹⁰

Se arrienda’s dual temporal structure, title, and epigraph establish its allegorical qualities. The film’s elliptical narrative unfolds in two distinct time periods separated by fifteen years, at the beginning and tail end of the Transition. Most of the first act is set in late 1988 and early 1989, just after the 1988 plebiscite that marked the end of the dictatorship and the beginning of the Transition (segs. 4-10). Segment 2 and the remainder of the film are primarily set in and around 2003. The exceptions are the brief sequences and fragments of sequences (segs. 2, 10, 19, 32, 38, 41, 44, 53) from *Las hormigas asesinas* (*Killer Ants*), a production which, in the narrative world of the film, was conceived of and shot around 1989.¹¹ *Se arrienda*’s dual temporal structure presents a split-frame portrait of the Transition to Democracy. This divided framing device encourages critical viewing, insomuch as the spectator assumes an active role in piecing together the characters’ lives in the intervening fifteen years.

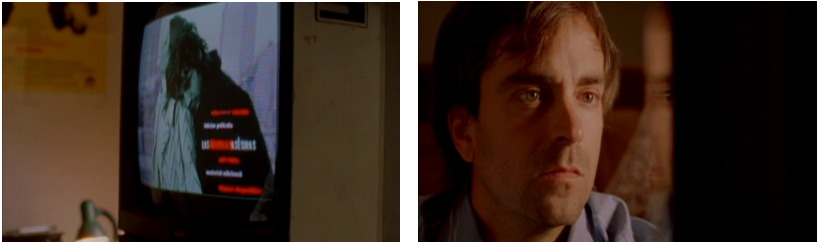
Se arrienda’s title—which translates to *For Rent* in English—reflects the plural qualities of the film’s allegory of Chile during the Transition. On its surface, the title alludes to Gastón’s work as a real estate agent for his father’s company. However, the title has two additional meanings. The title also refers to the film’s allegorical representation of Chile’s economy during the Transition, in which much is for sale (or rent). The title also alludes to Gastón’s anxieties about the incompatibility of his art and his new career as a real estate agent. Gastón’s job renting properties forces him to confront the complicated relationship between art and commerce, as well as his resistance to becoming a sell-out, a

theme that surfaces in the discussion at the pizzeria in Mendoza (seg. 6b) and when Gastón and Balbo (Felipe Braun) visit the discotheque after Gastón's return to Santiago (seg. 34).

Like the film's temporal structure and title, the epigraph establishes *Se arrienda*'s allegorical qualities. The film's epigraph is the opening line of the English author L.P. Hartley's mid-century coming-of-age novel *The Go-Between*.¹² The epigraph, quoted in Spanish-language translation, reads: "El pasado es como un país extranjero: allí hacen las cosas de otro modo" (00:12-00:19). The original English is more direct: "The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there" (17).¹³ These are the words of the novel's sexagenarian narrator, Leo, who recounts his stay at Brandham Hall in the English countryside in July 1900, when he was a young adolescent.

Hartley's novel and Fuguet's film share three features in common. First, they have similar narrative structures. The film and book shift between the protagonists' present (the 1950s in *The Go-Between* and the early 2000s in *Se arrienda*) and the recent past (the turn of the 20th-century in *The Go-Between* and the late 1980s in *Se arrienda*). Second, both works function as national allegories. The narrator of Hartley's novel draws a parallel between his experiences at Brandham Hall and the calamitous first half of the 20th century in England and continental Europe—a century young Leo naively believed would be "the dawn of a Golden Age" (20). The adolescent protagonist's high hopes for the epoch are dashed by the tragedy that unfolds during the hot summer of 1900. As we shall see, a similar trajectory and tone of disillusionment mark Fuguet's film, as the optimism of the Human Rights Now! concert and the earlier 1988 plebiscite—with its famous theme song "Chile, la alegría ya viene" ("Chile, happiness is coming")—recedes and the hoped-for change fails to materialize. Finally, *Se arrienda* and *The Go-Between* feature objects imbued with personal history that precipitate their narratives. These metafictional objects, Leo's diary and the film *Las hormigas asesinas*, respectively, function as "lieux de mémoire where memory crystallizes and secretes itself" (Nora 7). They are manifestations of the past, but also invitations for their creators to reckon with their personal histories and memories. In Hartley's novel, the elder Leo's discovery of his old personal diary motivates his retelling of his experiences at Brandham Hall. Similarly, *Se arrienda* begins with Gastón watching *Las hormigas asesinas*, a film which he helped make when he was a university

student (Gastón created the soundtrack). Like the diary, this black-and-white film within *Se arrienda* functions as a point of departure for the narrative and dialogues with the primary, reality-based narrative level. Additionally, *Las hormigas asesinas* features prominent allegorical elements. This film-within-the-film presents an invasion of killer ants as a loosely-veiled metaphor for the September 11, 1973 coup and subsequent dictatorship, a connection underscored by newspaper articles read by the protagonist Paul Kazán (Benjamín Vicuña).¹⁴ By opening with this epigraph from *The Go-Between*, *Se arrienda* establishes parallels between both works and, by extension, draws attention to its own allegorical qualities.



Gastón watches *Las hormigas asesinas*

Two early sequences (segs. 5 and 6) exemplify *Se arrienda*'s representation of the early stages of the Transition as a time of solidarity, collective optimism, and a preoccupation with human rights. These sequences are set before, during, and after the October 14, 1988 Human Rights Now! concert in Mendoza, Argentina. This Argentine city near the two countries' border was chosen as the site of the concert after Pinochet refused to host the event in Chile. The Mendoza concert was the penultimate show of Human Rights Now!, a six-week, twenty-stop world tour marking the fortieth anniversary of the signing of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948). The Human Rights Now! tour featured popular music stars from around the world, including Tracy Chapman, Peter Gabriel, Youssou N'Dour, Bruce Springsteen, and Sting.¹⁵ In Mendoza, these performers were joined by two iconic Chilean groups from two eras, the ensemble Inti-Illimani—an outfit affiliated with the New Chilean Song movement of the 1960s and 1970s—and Los Prisoneros, who at the time were one of Latin America's most prominent rock bands.

Thousands of Chileans traveled to the Estadio Mundialista Mendoza for the cosmopolitan cultural event, which took place just nine days after the victory of the “No” campaign in the 1988 plebiscite. In a *Los Angeles Times* article, James Smith describes the ecstatic crowds in the Argentine border city: “The penultimate concert on Friday in Mendoza, near the Argentina-Chile border, became a celebration of Pinochet’s defeat in a plebiscite Oct. 5. Thousands of Chileans attended, and two Chilean bands, recently returned from exile, joined the international stars on stage” (G4).¹⁶ Chilean author Ariel Dorfman, who attended the event, described the jubilant atmosphere: “This is a concert for Chile. If Pinochet had won the plebiscite, it would have been a protest. But we said no, and it’s a celebration” (Henke 141). The festive atmosphere, however, did not preclude protests, most notably during Sting’s Spanish-language performance of his song “They Dance Alone (Cueca Solo)” (1987). The British rock star was joined on stage by relatives of the disappeared holding photos of their missing loved ones. The presence of family members of the disappeared added a powerful visual element to the song, which, as its title suggests, is a tribute to the “cueca sola.” In the cueca sola, daughters, mothers, and widows of victims of the military regime perform the cueca—Chile’s national dance—alone, thereby highlighting the absence of their loved one.¹⁷

Fuguet himself attended the concert. He recalls: “Yo fui uno de esos chicos y ese recital fue uno de los grandes mitos de mi generación” (“Escritor chileno Fuguet rueda”; “I was one of those kids and that concert was one of the great myths of my generation”). He compares the Human Rights Now! concert in Mendoza to a defining cultural event of the 1960s: “Para mi generación Mendoza fue como Woodstock” (“For my generation Mendoza was like Woodstock”). Channeling Fuguet’s rosy recollections, the film represents the concert in Mendoza as a seminal cultural and political moment. For Gastón, his friends, and the 55 percent of Chilean who voted “No” in the plebiscite, the concert embodies a new frontier of possibility after a decade-and-a-half of repressive rule by Pinochet. The film depicts the concert, with its mix of global popular culture and human rights activism, as a moment of cultural, generational, and political change. Traveling alongside thousands of Chileans, Gastón, a student in music composition at the University of Chile, and his friends, who are also university students in their late teens

and early twenties, make the pilgrimage to Mendoza over the Andes via bus (seg. 5). Their shared mode of transportation reflects the collective exuberance and solidarity of the moment. After a scene in which Gastón and his friends descend from the bus to admire the vista at the border, the camera cuts to a series of ten shots of visually distinct, unlabeled archival footage (seg. 6a). This footage is comprised of images of Chileans traveling to Mendoza and scenes from the concert. Meanwhile, the upbeat song “Tele-ka” (1984) by the Argentine rock-en-español band Soda Stereo plays on the soundtrack—a self-reflexive allusion to *Se arrienda*’s trans-Andean soundtrack and production.¹⁸ In the shots of the concert, many of the attendees hold Chilean flags and ephemerae emblazoned with the rainbow “No” logo of the anti-Pinochet campaign. In the tenth and final shot of the sequence, the camera cuts away, revealing images from the concert on the television in the restaurant where Gastón and his friends eat pizza and discuss popular culture and their hopeful dreams for the future (seg. 6b). The framing of this archival footage within the television underscores the metacinematic nature of *Se arrienda* and echoes the film’s opening scene in which Gastón watches *Las hormigas asesinas* (seg. 2). After the camera pans away from the television, Luc Fernández (Nicolás Saavedra), the budding director, ironically remarks “It would have been great to film it all” (05:05-05:06).¹⁹

The incorporation of archival footage from the concert exemplifies the allegorical and cosmopolitan qualities of *Se arrienda*. These images of thousands of joyful concert-goers traveling together and enjoying music by some of the world’s most well-known musicians, reflect the optimism of Chileans like Gastón at the end of the military dictatorship. This is a celebration of Chile’s political and cultural opening to the world. In the same vein, the concert personifies the excitement Gastón and his friends feel towards Chile’s incipient democratization—Balbo wears a t-shirt inscribed with the “No” campaign logo—and their cosmopolitan cultural sensibilities. In this respect, their journey across the Andes is at once an act of political solidarity and plural cultural consumption. The jubilation, optimism, and solidarity on display in Mendoza carries over to the group’s return to Santiago and their “collective project” *Las hormigas asesinas* (Barraza 446).



Archival footage from the 1988 Human Rights Now! concert in Mendoza

Whereas the Human Rights Now! concert reflects the optimism and possibility felt by young Chileans at the end of the military dictatorship, the sequences set in 2003 depict a plutocratic and highly unequal society. Upon his return to Chile, Gastón confronts the economic model of hierarchical capitalism. The film focuses on two key aspects of hierarchical capitalism: family capitalism and socio-economic inequality. In the film's contemporary present of 2003, Gastón, now in his mid-thirties, has recently returned to Chile after working and studying in the United States for the previous six years. In New York, Gastón pursued a career as a composer, but, as he tells his father, he was unable to break into the music industry.²⁰ Back in Santiago, Gastón finds that things have changed. Cancino (Cristóbal Gumucio), now divorced and wearing a suit and tie, states the obvious: "A lot of things happened since you left" (28:46-28:48). Gastón's friends have adapted their professional careers and artistic aspirations to the demands of the market: Luc Fernández is a television director and Balbo is a popular Grammy-winning composer and local celebrity.

Gastón's relationship with his father (played by Jaime Vadell, one of Chile's most well-known actors) exemplifies family capitalism, a phenomenon that is "endemic in Latin America" (*Hierarchical Capitalism* 47). According to Schneider, family capitalism is defined by the dominant role of family-owned and controlled businesses in an economy. These firms "are characterized by concentrated ownership, family control, and multisectoral diversification" (47). These family-controlled business groups are leading forces in economies across Latin America. Schneider notes that "In the 2000s, more than 90 percent of the 32 largest business groups in Latin America were controlled by families and most had several family members in top management positions" (47). In Chile, the Angelini, Luksic, Matte, Paulmann, Said, Solari, and Yarur conglomerates, the largest of these firms, exemplify this pattern of family control.²¹ Although Fernández Propiedades is not a diversified conglomerate like the Solari family's Falabella, it is nonetheless emblematic of this nepotistic manifestation of capitalism.²² The company's employees, which include Gastón and his cousin, reflect its identity as the domain of the Fernández family.

Gastón's father is the owner and operator of Fernández Propiedades. The elder Fernández's lack of a first name underscores his identity as an archetypal Chilean family business owner. His relationship with his son is inextricable from the family business: he seeks to cultivate Gastón

as the heir of Fernández Propiedades. The elder Fernández pushes his son towards the family business by dismissing his career as a musician, while also threatening to cut him off financially. The relationship between the business owner and his musician son represents a synecdoche, on a much smaller scale, of the historical relationship between strongmen like Diego Portales (1793-1837), Carlos Ibáñez (1877-1960), and Augusto Pinochet (1915-2006) and the Chilean nation.²³ During their time in power, these autocrats positioned themselves as fathers of the nation—a role the elder Fernández occupies within his family and business. Moreover, in his use of both threats (he tells Gastón he will raise the rent on his company-owned apartment) and incentives (the job at the family firm appears to be an open-ended offer) to push his son into the family business, Gastón's father enacts Portales's principle of authoritarian governance: "The stick and the cake, justly and opportunely administered, are the specifics with which any nation can be cured, however inveterate its bad habits may be" (Portales quoted in Loveman 125).²⁴ In Fuguet's film, the relationship between father and son represents a microcosm of the relationship between autocrats like Portales and the Chilean nation.

In addition to these historical parallels, the fraught and unequal relationship between Gastón and his father closely resembles the troubled dynamics of another fictional father-son pair: don Julio and Julio in Silvio Caiozzi's *Julio comienza en Julio* (Chile, 1979).²⁵ Although *Se arrienda* does not explicitly reference Caiozzi's film, both works center on a father-son relationship, depict the power of Chile's landowning class, and use color to represent the past.²⁶ In Caiozzi's film, the authoritarian latifundista don Julio García del Castaño arranges for his adolescent son Julio to undergo his sexual initiation. Julio rebels against his father's abusive and possessive behavior by falling in love with the prostitute with whom he loses his virginity. However, his youthful insurrection is short lived; he cannot escape his father's reach. The film culminates in an act of paternal revenge: don Julio compels Julio to watch him have sex with his son's girlfriend. In both *Se arrienda* and *Julio comienza en Julio*, the sons' relationship with their fathers is characterized by dependency, subordination, and resentment. Julio's sexual coming-of-age and Gastón's professional and artistic development unfold under the vigilant eyes of their domineering fathers. Another point of connection between these two films is the two fathers' source of wealth. Both men derive their fortunes

and power from their positions as members of the country's landowning class, which has dominated Chile's economy, politics, and social relations since the colonial period (Loveman 29). Finally, *Se arrienda* and *Julio comienza en Julio* incorporate color as a means of representing the past. Caiozzi's film has a sepia color tone, while the sequences from *Las hormigas asesinas* are in black and white. These sepia and monochromatic color palettes emphasize their respective works' historical qualities, while also signaling their remove from the present.

The first scene in which Gastón and his father appear together in *Se arrienda* establishes the shared bond and unequal power dynamics between the two men, and also sets the stage for Gastón's accession to the family business (seg. 13). Father and son visit the grave of Gastón's mother in Santiago's General Cemetery, where some of the country's most famous figures, including Salvador Allende, are buried. The setting of this scene in the cemetery is resonant with symbolism. On the one hand, this hallowed location alludes to twin obsessions of the Chilean elite: family and tradition. On the other, the setting reflects Gastón's moribund artistic career. In the first half of the scene, Gastón and his father are framed side by side in a static long shot, peering down at the grave of Gastón's mother (26:05-26:09). The juxtaposition between the camera's far-off placement and the characters' physical closeness serves a dual and contradictory function. The camera's distance from the characters underscores the emotional divide between Gastón and his father, while their side-by-side positioning in the frame emphasizes their close bond and shared moment of grief.

The second part of the scene at the cemetery is an extended long shot of Gastón and his father as they walk along a path towards the camera (26:05-27:29). The elder Fernández scolds his son for wasting time in New York under the aegis of what he sardonically calls "the Fernández grant" (26:23-26:24). Gastón replies that he worked at a café to support himself and was therefore unable to dedicate as much time as he wanted to composing music. Gastón's father, unconvinced, responds: "You can work in New York, but you can't work here? Is it bad taste to work in Santiago de Chile?" (26:48- 26:53). He goes on to connect his wife's death to his son's immaturity and lack of professional ambitions: "Maybe it would've been better if I'd died instead" (27:13-27:15). Expanding on these comments, he says: "when the father dies . . . [b]oys grow up, they turn into men. Without your mother, you seem like an orphan" (27:16-27:28). As his father sees it, Gastón's way out

of his orphaned state and into adulthood, like the path they walk on, is straightforward: enter the family business. A position at Fernández Propiedades is not only Gastón's birthright; it is also a means of becoming an adult member of the family. This choice between growing up or remaining in a state of arrested development comes to a head when Gastón visits his father at the office to ask for a loan.



Father and son visit the cemetery

Gastón approaches his father for money at the headquarters of Fernández Propiedades, a glass office building typical of the architecture in the capital's financial district, an area colloquially referred to as Sanhattan (seg. 21).²⁷ The encounter between Gastón and his father high above Santiago is not only a key moment in the development of the film's narrative; it is also infused with allegorical symbolism. In situating this scene within a skyscraper perched above the city, the film alludes to the concentration of wealth and power among Chile's family businesses. Inside the building, Gastón's father, wearing a white shirt and gold tie, quizzes his son, who sports a hoodie. Their conversation, which unfolds like an interrogation, touches on a range of issues, including Chile's economy, its health care system, its social safety net, and questions of individual responsibility. Father and son sit across from one another at a large table in the office's conference room, a space which reflects the entangled themes of their conversation: business and family. A map of Santiago hangs on the wall behind Gastón, a visual symbol of the nature and reach of his father's business.

After commenting that his son "barely comes around to see me" (33:04-33:06), the elder Fernández consults the notepad in front of him and fires off a round of questions. He asks his son whether he has a pension fund, health insurance, car, bank account, and life insurance (33:20-33:56), items which Joanna Page observes, "might serve as a

checklist for citizenship in neoliberal Chile” (275). These questions elicit a “no” from Gastón. When his dad asks whether he receives royalties, Gastón responds that he “once got a check from Poland . . . Don’t ask me why, but *The Killer Ants* became a cult movie over there. We never understood why. Maybe because Pascal Barros [the film’s fictional star] looks Polish” (34:08-34:22). When Gastón tells his dad that the check for seven dollars is framed on his wall, his father rebukes him. “I’m being serious, Gastón,” he says (34:31-34:32). His father then asks whether Gastón has any real estate, which produces another negative response.

Vadell’s character considers Gastón’s lack of health care, a car, and a pension fund as tangible evidence of his progeny’s immaturity and shirking of financial responsibility. As his deliberate pattern of questioning reveals, the elder Fernández equates being a responsible adult with having the resources to acquire private health insurance and a private pension—material signs of respectability as well as products designed to offer financial security and peace of mind.²⁸ In an effort to goad his son towards a career in the family business—an offer he does not explicitly make in the film—he tells Gastón “you have to get your act together” (35:29-35:34) and concludes by saying that he will increase the rent on his son’s apartment to the “market rate” (35:22-35:23). Consistent with a family capitalism-friendly approach, the elder Fernández does not seek to cut his son off; rather he uses a financial stick to prod Gastón into the family business, thereby deepening his son’s connection to and dependence on the family patrimony.



From slacker to businessman

Gastón’s father not only thrives within Chile’s hierarchical economy; he also puts this economic model into practice by cultivating his own son as the company’s heir. The elder Fernández confirms his nepotistic intentions when Gastón, wearing a suit, shows up to

his first day of work (seg. 28): “Welcome to the company Gastón. I think you’ve made the right decision” (53:05-53:09). The right decision, in his father’s view, is following the well-trod path of family and tradition. In Gastón’s case, attaining the kind of financial security expected by the Chilean upper class means acquiescing to his father’s wishes and joining the family firm. However, Gastón’s decision to join the business is not just the result of his father’s appeal to “get his act together”; he is also motivated by a fear of ending up poor, isolated, and ostracized like Chernovsky. The film underscores this second motive via editing and juxtaposition. Gastón learns about his friend’s fall into poverty from Balbo and Cancino in the sequence just prior to his first day at work (seg. 26).

At the end of *Se arrienda*, Gastón and his father undergo a symbolic reconciliation as they pass through the car wash while remaining inside their automobile (seg. 51). Whereas their visit to the cemetery highlights the fissures and tension in their relationship—magnified by the absence of Gastón’s mother—their passage through the car wash is a moment of shared understanding and mutual respect, in which Gastón’s father recognizes the value of his son’s music. The scene is comprised of two shots, which underscore father and son’s renewed intimacy. In the first shot, the camera, which is situated inside the car, frames Gastón, who sits in the passenger seat, and his father, who sits behind the wheel, in a two-shot from behind (1:43:33-1:43:42). The car inches slowly forward, its windshield is streaked with water. The two men’s interactions inside their car contrast with their earlier confrontation at the office, as well as Pancho Santander’s violent relationship with his father (seg. 48).²⁹ As father and son are pulled slowly through the car wash, a song from Gastón’s new composition of short instrumental pieces, *Departamentos vacíos* (*Empty Apartments*), plays on the car’s sound system.³⁰ As the title of the composition suggests, it is inspired by Gastón’s work as a real estate agent and evokes his cousin’s observation during his first day on the job—“Each customer’s a world of his own, you’ll never be totally prepared” (52:12-52:14). Extending this observation to the musical composition, each instrumental piece embodies one of these worlds. The composition bridges Gastón’s artistic impulses, his work at the family firm, and his romantic relationship with Elisa (Francisca Lewin).

As the music plays, Gastón’s father turns slightly towards his son and comments: “It’s nice” (1:43:39-1:43:41). His praise carries

a dual significance. He congratulates Gastón for the music itself, but also for the compromise it represents. After Gastón turns towards his father to acknowledge his approval, the camera cuts to another two-shot of the two men framed from the front through the windshield. Accompanying this change in the framing of the characters, the camera shifts position to the outside of the car (1:43:42-1:44:12). As in the long shot of Gastón and his father at their mother and wife's grave, the camera's placement outside of the glass establishes a buffer between the father-son pair and the viewer. The sound of an air dryer above the car melds with Gastón's new musical composition, and the streaks of water are pushed aside, revealing an unobstructed view of the two men. The characters' body language and position within the frame underscore this moment of cleansing reconciliation: father and son sit side by side (as opposed to face to face, as during their interaction at the company headquarters earlier in the film), grinning and looking straight ahead. Like the car, their relationship has undergone a symbolic baptism. They embrace a mutual understanding and respect for each other, all while keeping the business in the family. Yet notwithstanding their rapprochement, the elder Fernández is still in charge, unwilling, at least for now, to relinquish the driver's seat.



Father and son at the car wash

Gastón's successful reconciliation of family capitalism and his art contrasts with the tragic trajectory of Chernovsky. Like Gastón and his

father, Chernovsky is an allegorical figure, albeit from the opposite end of the socio-economic spectrum. Already an outsider figure by virtue of her Jewish background, she embodies the marginalized and vulnerable population in Transition-era Chile.³¹ Chernovsky first appears in the sequences set in 1988. She is an integral part of Gastón's friend group: she travels to Mendoza (seg. 5), shares in their discussion of popular culture at the pizzeria (seg. 6b), and encourages Gastón to participate in the making of *Las hormigas asesinas* (seg. 9). By 2003, Chernovsky's situation is very different: she is poor, isolated, and estranged from her friends.

Chernovsky only appears in one scene set during 2003 (seg. 15). This scene unfolds inside a bus company ticket office, where Chernovsky tries and fails to pay with a check for a ticket back home. Two shots preceding this scene in the ticket office underscore the distance between Gastón and his impoverished friend (seg. 14). The first is a long shot of Gastón exiting the optical store *Rotter y Krauss* on the left side of the screen. The camera pans right, tracking him as he walks past a store front—perhaps the bus ticket office—where people inside stand in a queue (27:29-27:37). Gastón stares straight ahead as he passes by the building. The framing of Gastón from a distance signals the film's upcoming shift in focus away from its protagonist, as well as the divide between his privileged social and economic circumstances and Chernovsky's alienating poverty. The camera then cuts from Gastón to a shot of pedestrians on a street corner as a bus passes by in the background (27:37-27:39), presaging the location and topic of discussion in the next scene.



Chernovsky stranded in Santiago

Inside the ticket office, Chernovsky pleads with a clerk to accept an expired check as payment for a return bus ticket to Los Vilos, a popular beach town on the Pacific coast north of Valparaíso. The framing and *mise-en-scène* underscore Chernovsky's precarious state. The placement of the camera behind a transparent barrier separating Chernovsky from the clerk and the use of shallow focus emphasize her isolation. The three men standing in line behind Chernovsky look on as she pleads with the clerk. The most distant of these men closely resembles Gastón in both appearance and costume, although the camera's shallow depth of field prevents the viewer from drawing a definitive conclusion. Nevertheless, the shared likeness of this man with Gastón and the fact that he does not recognize Chernovsky underscore the distance between the two characters' lives and socio-economic situations, as well as the absence of solidarity. After Chernovsky hands the clerk a check, the employee notes that the document is expired and, per company policy, she cannot accept it. Chernovsky makes a plea for sympathy: "Please, I've got to get back to Los Vilos. I don't feel very well" (27:50-27:55). When the clerk rebuffs her, Chernovsky appeals to their shared identity as women: "We're both women, I've got to pay this bill" (28:00-28:03). The clerk, unmoved by this appeal for solidarity and support, again responds that she cannot take the check: "It's out of date. The company doesn't let me accept them" (28:03-28:07). The scene ends as the camera cuts away from the ticket office and Chernovsky and reverts its focus back to Gastón.

The scene in the bus ticket office represents the persistence of poverty, the limits of the growth with equity model, and the dearth of solidarity in Transition-era Chile. Even the man with Gastón's likeness is not moved by Chernovsky's appeal for compassion. In addition to representing a lack of solidarity, this scene also functions as a counterweight to Gastón's successful immersion in the family business and the realization of his artistic endeavors. Although Gastón also struggles, he can rely on his father's financial support. More broadly, the tonal contrast between the scene in the ticket office, with its serious tone, and the sequences centered on Gastón, which are replete with humor and irony, underscores Chernovsky's suffering and her perilous circumstances.

Although the scene at the bus ticket office is the last time Chernovsky appears in *Se arrienda*, she is the topic of discussion during a conversation between Balbo, Cancino, and Gastón later in the film

(seg. 26). In this scene, Balbo and Cancino inform Gastón about how Chernovsky's life has unfolded since Gastón left for New York. Gastón's friends filter their narrative of Chernovsky's difficult life through the lenses of class and privilege—they have comfortable and stable lives as a music producer and businessman, respectively. Their recitation of Chernovsky's struggles with alcoholism and poverty is informed by their belief—which gradually manifests itself in their conversation—that hard work is a sign of respectability. They portray her as an absurd and pathetic figure who embodies economic and moral impoverishment.



Balbo, Cancino, and Gastón discuss Chernovsky's recent misfortunes

Balbo, Cancino, and Gastón, wearing jackets and sharing a cigarette, walk in lockstep through a residential street at night. The dim lighting of the scene reflects the unseemliness of the subject of their conversation, and also contrasts with the colorful elements of Balbo and Cancino's narrative of Chernovsky's hardships. The scene is comprised of three shots. In the first, the camera tracks the three men in profile and then lingers behind them, pausing in a static shot, as they walk to the end of an alleyway (46:00-46:57). In the second, also an extended take, the three men round a corner and the camera moves backward as they advance towards it (46:57-49:30). The scene ends with a shot of the three men in the foreground, waiting for a taxi (49:30-50:10). When the taxi pulls up to the curb, Balbo and Cancino depart for the City Hotel, while Gastón remains on the street and tells his friends that he would "rather walk" (49:40-49:41).³²

The conversation between Gastón and his two friends begins in medias res. Balbo and Cancino comment that Chernovsky always had affection for Gastón. Their discussion, however, takes on a grim tone as they discuss Chernovsky's recent misfortunes. Cancino remarks: "It's awful what she went through. It's sort of sad" (46:12-46:14). Balbo challenges his friend's show of sympathy: "Why? I mean you dig your own grave, man. It's sad to say it, but that's the way it is!" (46:14-46:20). Cancino replies, "Poetic justice. All the bad blood ends

up poisoning you” (46:22-46:24). Gastón, who is unfamiliar with Chernovsky’s recent troubles, asks Balbo and Cancino to explain what happened to his friend. In response, the two men detail Chernovsky’s humiliations and hardships: losing a leg in an accident, a failed campaign for mayor, and a miscarriage.

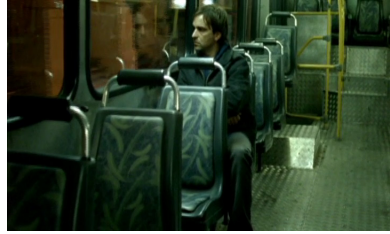
Balbo and Cancino depict Chernovsky as a ridiculous figure, a self-destructive anomaly who was rightfully expelled from respectable society. In emphasizing the picaresque and outlandish aspects of Chernovsky’s story, like her affair with a married fisherman with seventeen children, the two underscore her marginalization and fall into disrespectability. After hearing about the affair with the fisherman, Gastón challenges his friends’ version of events: “Hang on . . . what the fuck’s this? Fiction? This is like a fucking soap opera!” (47:32-47:37). Balbo responds: “Life for most is worse than a fucking soap opera!” (47:37-47:39). Balbo’s comments diminish Chernovsky’s plight by suggesting that her alcoholism, poor health, and poverty are exercises in bad taste, which pale in comparison to the adversities faced by most Chileans.

Ultimately, Balbo and Cancino’s unsympathetic representation of Chernovsky reveals more about their rigid view of class and their commitment to the existing societal order of hierarchical capitalism than their penniless friend. Balbo sums up Chernovsky’s plight as the result of “bad management” (46:29-46:30) and warped expectations: “you can’t write poetry and make handicrafts and expect the country or the government to pay for your hobbies,” he tells Gastón (48:53-48:58). Balbo, who we see earlier reading the January 9-15, 1989 issue of left-wing magazine *APSI*³³ with the headline “El Programa Económico de la Oposición” (16:12-16:29; “The Economic Program of the Opposition”), and whose nickname in university was “J.J.C.C.” or “Julián Cristóbal Juventud Comunista” (1:02:56-1:03:02; “Julián Cristóbal Communist Youth”), is now an unabashed apologist of the country’s neoliberal economy.³⁴ Balbo and Cancino ignore structural factors like Chile’s limited social safety net and the entrenchment of socio-economic inequality, and instead blame Chernovsky’s for failing to adapt to and prosper within the country’s hierarchical mode of capitalism. Their observations echo the comments made by Gastón’s father in the earlier scene at the Fernández Propiedades office in which he chastises his son for neglecting to obtain health care, a retirement fund, and other trappings of Chile’s upper class.

For Balbo and Cancino, accounting for Chernovsky's tragic fate is a matter of cold analysis, albeit one informed by misogyny and class hierarchy. "The market is cruel," Balbo declares (48:24-48:26). After Gastón pushes back—"Fuck, what does the market have to do with it?" (48:27-48:28)—, Balbo responds: "[It's] much better to take advantage of it than b[e] destroyed by it. She was always a bit of a loser" (48:29-48:34). For Balbo and Cancino, Chernovsky embodies indifference and failure in an economic system which tolerates neither. She is one of the 52 percent of Chileans who in a 2001 survey identified themselves as "perdedores" ("losers").³⁵ Like Cancino, Balbo is unable to muster sympathy for his friend: "I should really feel bad about all this . . . but how the fuck can you care about a bitch who doesn't give a shit about reality. It's fucking irresponsible! That's not what I call idealism" (49:10- 49:21). In the eyes of Balbo and Cancino, Chernovsky's hardships are the result of her unwillingness to adapt to the country's unforgiving economy. Rather than express sympathy or extend a hand to their friend, Balbo and Cancino write her off as a lost cause and an example to be avoided. They expect her to bear her misfortune alone. These two scenes centered on Chernovsky reflect a fundamental shift in the relationship and outlook of this group of friends. Whereas the sequences set in the late 1980s exude a sense of hope, camaraderie, and collaboration, the portrayal of Chernovsky at the bus ticket office and Balbo, Cancino, and Gastón's nocturnal conversation reflect a society marked by socio-economic inequality, a limited social safety net, and a dearth of solidarity.

To conclude, I want to highlight two sequences that encapsulate the film's representation of Chile at the end of the Transition as a society that has jettisoned the collective spirit and action of the early years of the Transition. The first (seg. 5) is set in 1988 and shows Gastón and his friends as they make their way by bus over the Andes to Mendoza. In this sequence, the collective form of transportation parallels the communal expression of hope and optimism at the concert. The second (seg. 27) occurs just after the nocturnal conversation about Chernovsky's fall into poverty. As he rides along at night, Gastón's reflection stares back at him, a visual motif that underscores his dueling fears of selling-out by joining the family business and ending up poor and abandoned like Chernovsky. Whereas the bus ride in 1988 embodies a communal sense of enthusiasm, Gastón's lonely nocturnal ride reflects his personal isolation and anxiety. Considered

together, these two sequences encapsulate the film's portrayal of Chile during the Transition as a society which initially embraces democracy and an optimistic vision of the future, but which ultimately lacks solidarity to overcome an entrenched resistance to change.



Two bus rides

III. SEGMENT SUMMARY

Copy utilized: DVD, distributed by Bazuca Films.

(The beginning and end time, as well as the duration of each segment are noted in parentheses)

Part 1: Reflections on the Beginning of the Transition to Democracy

| | | | |
|---------|---------------|---|----------|
| Seg. 01 | (00:00-00:20) | Title credits and epigraph | (0'20") |
| Seg. 02 | (00:20-02:02) | Gastón watches <i>Las hormigas asesinas</i> | (1'42") |
| Seg. 03 | (02:02-02:12) | Title credits part two | (0'10") |
| Seg. 04 | (02:12-03:15) | 1988: Gastón shoplifts at the record store | (1'03") |
| Seg. 05 | (03:15-04:39) | Gastón and friends on the bus at the Argentina-Chile border | (1'24") |
| Seg. 06 | (04:39-09:19) | Human Rights Now! and Pizza | (4'40") |
| | | a) Human Rights Now! concert on TV (4:39-4:56) | |
| | | b) Dinner with friends and a discussion of Julio Iglesias and Los Prisioneros (4:56-9:19) | |
| Seg. 07 | (09:19-14:09) | Gastón pursues Cordelia in Mendoza | (4'50") |
| Seg. 08 | (14:09-15:55) | Lying in the grass, forgetting | (1'46") |
| Seg. 09 | (15:55-23:23) | Discussing <i>Las hormigas asesinas</i> in the cafeteria | (7'28") |
| Seg. 10 | (23:23-24:11) | <i>Las hormigas asesinas</i> : in the metro station | (0'48") |

Part 2: Confronting Adulthood and Family Capitalism

| | | | |
|---------|---------------|--|----------|
| Seg. 11 | (24:11-24:59) | 15 years later: Gastón in the streets of Santiago | (0'48") |
| Seg. 12 | (24:59-26:05) | Gastón at the doctor's office | (1'06") |
| Seg. 13 | (26:05-27:29) | Gastón and his father visit the cemetery | (1'24") |
| Seg. 14 | (27:29-27:39) | Shots of downtown Santiago | (0'10") |
| Seg. 15 | (27:39-28:09) | Chernovsky at the bus ticket office | (0'30") |
| Seg. 16 | (28:09-29:15) | Gastón meets Cancino and Paula for a concert | (1'06") |
| Seg. 17 | (29:15-29:47) | Gastón calls Cordelia | (0'32") |
| Seg. 18 | (29:47-31:06) | Gastón returns home and watches Balbo on TV | (1'19") |
| Seg. 19 | (31:06-32:27) | <i>Las hormigas asesinas</i> : Notes from Underground and Nido | (1'21") |

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|--|-----------|
| Seg. 20 | (32:27-32:47) | Gastón drinks coffee and travels to his father's office | (0'20"") |
| Seg. 21 | (32:47-35:59) | Gastón and his father talk finances and Gastón's future at the office | (3'12"") |
| Seg. 22 | (35:59-39:03) | Gastón encounters Balbo in the pharmacy | (3'04"") |
| Seg. 23 | (39:03-43:28) | Gastón and Cordelia wake up together | (4'25"") |
| Seg. 24 | (43:28-45:45) | At McDonald's with Cancino and his daughter | (2'17"") |
| Seg. 25 | (45:45-46:00) | Interlude: streets of Santiago | (0'15"") |
| Seg. 26 | (46:00-50:10) | Balbo, Cancino, and Gastón discuss Chernovsky's misfortunes | (3'10"") |
| Seg. 27 | (50:10-51:51) | Gastón goes home on the bus | (1'41"") |
| Part 3: Towards Reconciliation | | | |
| Seg. 28 | (51:51-54:44) | Gastón's first day at work a) For sale billboards (51:51-52:07) b) Gastón in the office (52:08-53:09) c) At the mechanic (53:09-54:29) d) Driving to the apartment (54:29-54:44) | (2'53"") |
| Seg. 29 | (54:44-57:00) | Gastón shows Pancho an apartment | (2'16"") |
| Seg. 30 | (57:00-58:35) | Gastón shows former house of religious order to a wealthy young man | (1'35"") |
| Seg. 31 | (58:36-59:55) | Gastón shows apartment to Elisa and her boyfriend | (1'19"") |
| Seg. 32 | (59:55-1:00:21) | <i>Las hormigas asesinas</i> : walking in tandem | (0'26"") |
| Seg. 33 | (1:00:21-1:01:29) | Gastón and Balbo discuss collaborating together over sushi | (1'08"") |
| Seg. 34 | (1:01:29-1:04:00) | Gastón and Balbo continue their discussion in the discotheque | (2'31"") |
| Seg. 35 | (1:04:00-1:04:54) | Gastón discusses the problems of a cash deal with two clients | (0'54"") |
| Seg. 36 | (1:04:54-1:06:18) | Cordelia tells Gastón her boyfriend proposed | (1'24"") |
| Seg. 37 | (1:06:18-1:07:54) | Gastón encounters Pancho in the supermarket | (1'36"") |
| Seg. 38 | (1:07:54-1:08:40) | <i>Las hormigas asesinas</i> : City Hotel and descent to the <i>Insomnio</i> discotheque | (0'46"") |
| Seg. 39 | (1:08:40-1:19:53) | Balbo's birthday party at the Museum of Natural History a) Reencounter with Luc (1:08:40-1:13:56) b) Gastón and Elisa in the galleries (1:13:56-1:19:53) | (11'13"") |
| Seg. 40 | (1:19:53-1:20:02) | Gastón stares at a computer | (0'09"") |
| Seg. 41 | (1:20:02-1:20:35) | <i>Las hormigas asesinas</i> : <i>El Clamor</i> and swimming pool | (0'33"") |
| Seg. 42 | (1:20:35-1:21:52) | Gastón and Elisa meet outside the apartment | (1'17"") |
| Seg. 43 | (1:21:52-1:25:05) | Gastón and Elisa visit Cerro San Cristóbal | (3'13"") |
| Seg. 44 | (1:25:05-1:25:36) | <i>Las hormigas asesinas</i> : rooftop kiss | (0'31"") |
| Seg. 45 | (1:25:36-1:27:31) | Gastón waits fruitlessly for Elisa at the cinema | (1'55"") |
| Seg. 46 | (1:27:31-1:31:25) | Elisa and Gastón discuss the previous night, while a woman looks at an apartment | (3'54"") |
| Seg. 47 | (1:31:25-1:32:13) | Gastón in the car with his father and cousin | (0'48"") |
| Seg. 48 | (1:32:13-1:41:47) | Gastón and Pancho discuss careers, music, fathers | (9'34"") |
| Seg. 49 | (1:41:47-1:42:41) | Gastón and his cousin visit a prospective property | (0'54"") |
| Seg. 50 | (1:42:41-1:43:33) | Gastón and Balbo discuss music, Gastón's new composition <i>Departamentos vacíos</i> | (0'52"") |
| Seg. 51 | (1:43:33-1:44:12) | Gastón and his father listen to <i>Departamentos</i> | (0'39"") |

| | | |
|---------|---|---------|
| | <i>vacíos</i> as they go through the car wash | |
| Seg. 52 | (1:44:12-1:44:31) Shots of skyscrapers and apartment buildings | (0'19") |
| Seg. 53 | (1:44:31-1:46:03) <i>Las hormigas asesinas</i> : "Programas Muy Especiales" | (1'32") |
| | a) <i>No se puede vivir sin amor</i> (1:44:31-1:45:04) | |
| | b) Bathtub (1:45:05-1:45:14) | |
| | c) Paul runs through streets (1:45:14-1:46:03) | |
| Seg. 54 | (1:46:03-1:47:11) Gastón runs to Elisa's apartment | (1'08") |
| Seg. 55 | (1:47:11-1:49:35) Gastón and Elisa reconcile | (2'24") |
| Seg. 56 | (1:49:35-1:54:48) End credits | (5'13") |

IV. TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Country: Chile

Language: Spanish

Year: 2005

Shooting Format: Super 16mm, Color and Black and White

Running Time: 114'48"

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Director: | Alberto Fuguet |
| Screenplay: | Alberto Fuguet and Francisco Ortega |
| Sound Design: | David Miranda |
| Original Music: | Cristián Heyne and Andrés Valdivia |
| Art Director: | Daniela Jordán |
| Editor: | Teresa Viera-Gallo |
| Director of Photography: | Jorge González |
| Producer: | Luigi Araneda |
| Executive Producer: | Diego Valenzuela |
| Associate Producers: | Alejandro Burr, Álvaro Corvera, Luciano Cruz-Coke |
| Musical Producer: | Cristián Heyne |
| Assistant Director: | René Martín |
| Unit Production Manager: | Carolina Carter |
| Cast: | Luciano Cruz-Coke (Gastón Fernández), Felipe Braun (Julián Balbo), Francisca Lewin (Elisa), Jaime Vadell (Gastón's Father), Ignacia Allamand (Cordelia), Diego Casanueva (Pancho Santander), Cristóbal Gumucio (Cancino), Nicolás Saavedra (Luc Fernández), Eliana Furman (Chernovsky), Maité Pascal (Fernanda), Nayra Ilic (Morgana), Julio Fuentes (Ivo), Nathalie Soubllette (Cecilia), Luis Alonso (Gato), Nicole (Vanessa Voss), Benjamín Vicuña (Paul Kazán) |
| English-language Subtitles: | Paula Salazar |
| Production Companies: | Cinépata, GOA, El Asombro, Lastarria 90 |
| Associate Production Company: | Cine Sur |
| Distributor: | Bazuca Films |
| Funding: | BancoEstado, Ópticas Rotter y Krauss, HP, Farmacias Ahumada, Líder, Smartcom, Pisco Mistral, Reebok, McDonald's, Blockbuster, <i>El Mercurio</i> |
| Premiere: | October 1, 2005 (2005 Valdivia Film Festival) |
| Theatrical Release: | October 6, 2005 (Chile) |
| Spectators: | 93,153 (Chile) |

Shot in Santiago and Mendoza between January and February 2005

All images from *Se arrienda* used with the permission of Alberto Fuguet and Cinépata

Notes

1. Fuguet opens his cinema-centric book *Cinépata* (2012) with the declaration: “He sido cinéfilo desde siempre” (11; “I have always been a cinephile”). Unless noted, all translations are my own.

2. Fuguet’s first venture in filmmaking was the screenplay he wrote for Martín Rodríguez’s film *2 hermanos en un lugar de la noche* (Chile, 2000).

3. For more on the 1988 plebiscite see Constable and Valenzuela, “Chile’s Return to Democracy.”

4. See Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional, “Reforma constitucional que introduce diversas modificaciones a la constitución política de la República” and *The Economist*, “Chile: Democratic at last.”

5. See Ffrench-Davis (25-34) and Collier and Sater (390-410).

6. For comparison, Argentina’s Gini coefficient measured 46.8 in 1991 and 49.3 in 2005. The United States’ Gini coefficient measured 38.2 in 1991 and 40.5 in 2004 (OECD, “Gini index”).

7. The Rettig Commission served as a model for Peru and South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation commissions. See *Report of the Chilean National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation* (1991), *Informe de la Comisión Nacional Sobre Prisión Política y Tortura* (2005), and *Informe de la Comisión Presidencial Asesora para la Calificación de Detenidos Desaparecidos, Ejecutados Políticos y Víctimas de Prisión Política y Tortura* (2011).

8. Cristián Galaz, Gustavo Graef Marino, Gonzalo Justiniano, Ricardo Larraín, and Andrés Wood are among the most notable Transition-era filmmakers.

9. Pablo Larraín, Alicia Scherson, and Sebastián Silva are contemporaries of Fuguet who exemplify this cosmopolitan variety of filmmaking. Like Fuguet, these three filmmakers employ transnational production, distribution, and exhibition strategies. They incorporate the theme of cinephilia in their films through representations of cinephilia and filmmaking.

10. Luciano Cruz-Coke served as Chile’s Minister of Culture from 2010 to 2013.

11. *Las hormigas asesinas* appears as an apocryphal film in Fuguet’s 1994 novel *Por favor, rebobinar* (*Please, Rewind*). In 2005, Fuguet released *Las hormigas asesinas* as a stand-alone short film.

12. Joseph Losey directed a 1971 filmic adaptation of *The Go-Between*.

13. In *Apuntes autistas* (*Autistic Notes*, 2007), Fuguet, citing Hartley’s novel, observes that the past seems more exotic than the foreign: “La famosa primera frase de *The Go-Between* (‘el pasado es como un país extranjero’) ya no tiene el mismo valor. Hoy el pasado es mucho más inexplicable e insabible que el extranjero. Si existiera una máquina del tiempo, no me cabe duda que viajar al Chile de 1964 sería bastante más raro y exótico y choqueante que

viajar a Mendoza, Cleveland u Odessa” (19; “The famous first line of *The Go-Between* (‘the past is a foreign country’) does not have the same meaning anymore. Today the past is much more inexplicable and elusive than the foreign. If there were a time machine, I have no doubt that traveling to Chile in 1964 would be much more weird and exotic and shocking than traveling to Mendoza, Cleveland, or Odessa”).

14. The first headline from the fictional newspaper *El Clamor* alludes to the disappeared during the dictatorship: “A 98 mil sube el número de desaparecidos en Valparaíso” (1:20:02-1:20:07; “The number of disappeared in Valparaíso rises to 98 thousand”). The second article describes a situation that parallels the September 11, 1973 coup: “Se requiere intervención del Ejército” (1:20:12-1:20:15; “Army intervention required”). The name Paul Kazán is a reference to the Hollywood director Elia Kazan. This connection is underscored in the full-length *Las hormigas asesinas* by the presence of a Spanish-language translation of the filmmaker’s autobiography in Paul’s apartment.

15. In his review of the final concert of the tour in Buenos Aires for the *Los Angeles Times*, James Smith highlights the performers’ political activism: “The 20th and final concert of the six-week ‘Human Rights Now!’ Tour combined the virtuosity of Springsteen, Sting, Peter Gabriel, Tracy Chapman and Youssou N’Dour of Senegal with odes to the missing, the tortured and the persecuted in Argentina, Chile and South Africa” (G1).

16. Members of Inti-Illimani returned from exile in Italy at the end of the Pinochet regime.

17. The cueca sola was featured in a prominent advertisement for the “No” campaign produced by the Grupo Proceso collective. See Marco Jiménez’s 1990 documentary *Memorias primera victoria*. For more on Sting’s performance see Henke (146-67).

18. *Se arrienda* was shot in Mendoza and Santiago.

19. All Spanish-language dialogue from *Se arrienda* is quoted from the English-language subtitles by Paula Salazar.

20. Gastón’s experiences abroad are part of a larger demographic and social phenomenon. In 2000 and 2001, an estimated 75,800 Chileans lived in the United States, making it the second most popular destination for Chilean emigrants after Argentina (OECD, *Connecting with Emigrants* 198).

21. In 2016, these seven family-controlled conglomerates had a combined market capitalization of just under twenty-five billion U.S. Dollars (“Ranking de Grupos Económicos” 7). See Schneider, “Economic Liberalization and Corporate Governance: The Resilience of Business Groups in Latin America.”

22. Falabella epitomizes the diversified nature of many Chilean conglomerates. Falabella owns and operates department stores, hardware stores, supermarkets, and a travel agency. The company also has banking, consumer finance, and insurance divisions. Falabella operates in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, and Peru.

23. For more on these three leaders see Loveman (111-28, 218-28, and 310-61).

24. For more on Portales see Quay Hutchinson et al., “The Authoritarian Republic” (139-40).

25. *Julio comienza en Julio* was one of a handful of feature-length films made in Chile in the 1970s during the dictatorship.

26. The narrator of Fuguet’s 2003 novel *Las películas de mi vida* (*The Movies of My Life*) recalls watching *Julio comienza en Julio* as a teenager: “The title *Julio comienza en Julio* masterfully summed up the movie’s theme. A kid is about to turn fifteen, and his father takes him—of course—to lose his virginity. We didn’t know what else was supposed to happen, but if that much did, we’d be happy. All of us were fifteen, and the majority were technically virgins” (246).

27. See Zambra, “Las dos décadas de Sanhattan” and Leal Trujillo et al., *Global Santiago* (2).

28. The country’s private health insurance system, known by the acronym ISAPRE, was established in 1981. The private pension system was implemented in 1980. The pension reform was the brainchild of then Secretary of Labor and Pensions José Piñera, who is the elder brother of President Sebastián Piñera. Private pensions are commonly referred to by the acronym AFP. See Loveman (338-39) and Collier and Sater (371-74).

29. Pancho’s character and storyline are loosely adapted from Fuguet’s short story “El Far West” (“Far West”). The story was published in Fuguet’s 2004 short story collection *Cortos* (*Shorts*).

30. The song is titled “Emerger” (“Emerging”) and is performed by Andrés Valdivia.

31. Vulnerable and marginalized characters like Chernovsky appear in many Transition-era films, including Gustavo Graef Marino’s *Johnny Cien Pesos* (1993), Gonzalo Justiniano’s *Caluga o menta* (1990), and Orlando Lübbert’s *Taxi para 3* (2001). See Kemp (37).

32. The City Hotel is situated in downtown Santiago. This historic building appears in a number of Fuguet’s literary works, including his novels *Mala onda* (*Bad Vibes*) and *Por favor, rebobinar*. The City Hotel is also featured in *Las hormigas asesinas* (seg. 38).

33. *APSI* or *Agencia de Prensa de Servicios Internacionales* was founded in 1976 and ceased publication in 1995. The magazine was a prominent voice of the opposition during the dictatorship. The headline of the issue (no. 286) Balbo reads underscores the film’s economic focus.

34. Balbo’s nickname is a play on the Juventudes Comunistas de Chile (Communist Youths of Chile), which is often referred to by the acronym J.J.C.C.

35. See Palet and Velasco, eds., *Nosotros los chilenos* (257) and Jocelyn-Holt (581-84).

Works Cited

- 2 hermanos en un lugar de la noche*. Directed Martín Rodríguez, Roos Film, 2000.
- “APSL.” *Memoria Chilena*, www.memoriachilena.cl/602/w3-article-96757.html. Accessed 14 Dec. 2017.
- Aylwin Azócar, Patricio. “En el acto de aniversario de la muerte del Presidente don José Manuel Balmaceda.” 19 Sept. 1991. *La Transición Chilena: Discursos Escogidos Marzo 1990-1992*, edited by Secretaría de Comunicación y Cultura and Ministerio Secretaría General de Gobierno, Andrés Bello, 1992, pp. 108-12.
- . “Justice ‘To the Degree Possible’: The Rettig Report.” 1991. *The Chile Reader*, translated by Trevor Martenson, edited by Elizabeth Quay Hutchison, et al., Duke UP, 2014, pp. 527-33.
- Blow Out*. Directed by Brian De Palma, Cinema 77—Gería Productions—Filmway Pictures—Viscount Associates, 1981.
- Barraza, Vania. “From ‘Sanhattan’ to ‘Nashvegas’: The Aesthetics of Detachment in Alberto Fuguet’s Filmmaking.” *Hispania*, vol. 98, no. 3, 2015, pp. 442-51.
- Caluga o menta*. Directed by Gonzalo Justiniano, Patagonia Pictures—Catalina—Cinema Arauco Films—Vision Comunicaciones, 1990.
- “Chile: Democratic at last.” *The Economist*, 15 Sept. 2005, www.economist.com/node/4409107. Accessed 9 Dec. 2017.
- Collier, Simon, and William Sater. *A History of Chile, 1808-2002*. 2nd ed., Cambridge UP, 2004.
- Constable, Pamela, and Arturo Valenzuela. “Chile’s Return to Democracy.” *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 68, no. 5, 1989, pp. 169-86.
- Echeverría, Cristián, et al., eds. “Ranking de Grupos Económicos 2016.” Centro de Estudios en Economía y Negocios Universidad de Desarrollo, 2017, ceen.udd.cl/estudios-y-publicaciones/ranking-de-riqueza-de-grupos-economicos. Accessed 5 Dec. 2017.
- “Escritor chileno Fuguet rueda en Mendoza parte de su primer filme.” *Efe*, 14 Jan. 2005.
- Ffrench-Davis, Ricardo. *Economic Reforms in Chile: From Dictatorship to Democracy*. 2nd ed., Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- Fuguet, Alberto. *Apuntes autistas*. Epicentro Aguilar, 2007.
- . *Bad Vibes*. Translated by Kristina Cordero, St. Martin’s Press, 1997.
- . *Cinépata (una bitácora)*. Alfaguara, 2012.
- . “El Far West.” *Cortos*, Alfaguara 2004, pp. 89-124.
- . “Far West.” *Shorts*, translated by Ezra E. Fitz, Rayo, 2005, pp. 83-121.
- . *Las películas de mi vida*. 2003. Rayo, 2005.

- . *Mala onda*. 1991. Alfaguara, 2011.
- . *Por favor, rebobinar*. 1994. Alfaguara, 2005.
- . *The Movies of My Life*. Translated by Ezra E. Fitz, Rayo, 2003.
- Hartley, L.P. *The Go-Between*. 1953. New York Review of Books, 2002.
- Henke, James. *Human Rights Now!*. Salem House, 1988.
- Huneus, Carlos. *La democracia semisoberana: Chile después de Pinochet*. Taurus, 2014.
- Informe de la Comisión Nacional Sobre Prisión Política y Tortura*. Ministerio de la Interior and Comisión Nacional sobre Prisión Política y Tortura, 2005.
- Informe de la Comisión Presidencial Asesora para la Calificación de Detenidos Desaparecidos, Ejecutados Políticos y Víctimas de Prisión Política y Tortura*. Comisión Asesora Presidencial para la Calificación de Detenidos Desaparecidos, Ejecutados Políticos y Víctimas de Prisión Política y Tortura, 2011.
- Invierno*. Directed by Alberto Fuguet, Cinémeta, 2015.
- Jocelyn-Holt, Alfredo. "So Conservative and Yet So Modern?: The Politics of Concertación." 2004. *The Chile Reader*, edited by Elizabeth Quay Hutchison, et al., Duke UP, 2014, pp. 581-84.
- Johnny Cien Pesos*. Directed by Gustavo Graef Marino, Catalina Cinema—Arauco Films—Visión Comunicaciones, 1993.
- Julio comienza en Julio*. Directed by Silvio Caiozzi, Andrea Films, 1979.
- Kemp, Leah. *Citizenship in Chilean Post-Dictatorship Film: 1990-2005*. Dissertation, UCLA, 2010.
- Leal Trujillo, Jesús, et al., eds. *Global Santiago: Profiling the Metropolitan Region's International Competitiveness and Connections*. Brookings Institution and JPMorgan Chase, 2016.
- Las hormigas asesinas*. Directed by Alberto Fuguet, GOA Films—El Asombro—Cinémeta—Lastarria 90, 2005.
- Locaciones: Buscando a Rusty James*. Directed by Alberto Fuguet, Cinémeta—Universidad Diego Portales, 2013.
- Loveman, Brian. *Chile: The Legacy of Hispanic Capitalism*. 2nd ed., Oxford UP, 1988.
- Memorias primera victoria*. Directed by Marco Jiménez, Grupo Proceso, 1990.
- Música campesina*. Directed by Alberto Fuguet, Cinémeta—Vanderbilt University, 2011.
- Nora, Pierre. "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*," Translated by Marc Roudebush. vol. 26, no. 1, 1989, pp. 7-24.

- Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development. Connecting with Emigrants: A Global Profile of Diasporas 2015*. OECD, 2015, www.oecd.org/publications/connecting-with-emigrants-9789264239845-en.htm. Accessed 4 Dec. 2017.
- . “Social spending.” *OECD*, <https://data.oecd.org/social-exp/social-spending.htm>. Accessed 27 Dec. 2017.
- Page, Joanna. “Neoliberalism in Chilean Cinema.” *A Companion to Latin American Cinema*, edited by Maria Delgado, et al., Wiley-Blackwell, 2017, pp. 269-84.
- Palet, Andrea, and Pilar Velasco, eds. *Nosotros los chilenos: un desafío cultural*. Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo, 2002.
- Quay Hutchison, Elizabeth, et al., eds. “The Authoritarian Republic.” *The Chile Reader*, Duke UP, 2014, pp. 139-40.
- “Reforma constitucional que introduce diversas modificaciones a la constitución política de la República.” *Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional*, 26 Aug. 2005, www.leychile.cl/Navegar?idLey=20050. Accessed 9 Dec. 2017.
- Report of the Chilean National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation*. Translated by Phillip Berryman, U of Notre Dame P, 1993.
- Rumble Fish*. Directed by Francis Ford Coppola, American Zoetrope, 1983.
- Schneider, Ben Ross. “Economic Liberalization and Corporate Governance: The Resilience of Business Groups in Latin America.” *Comparative Politics*, vol. 40, no. 4, 2008, pp. 379–97.
- . *Hierarchical Capitalism in Latin America: Business, Labor, and the Challenges of Equitable Development*. Cambridge UP, 2013.
- Se arrienda*. Directed by Alberto Fuguet, Cinépatá—GOA Films Chile—El Asombro—Lastarria 90, 2005.
- Smith, James. “Final Bow for ‘Human Rights’ Tour.” *Los Angeles Times*, 17 Oct. 1988, pp. G1-4.
- Soda Stereo. “Tele-Ka.” *Soda Stereo*, Sony BMG, 1984.
- Sting, “They Dance Alone (Cueca Solo).” ...*Nothing Like the Sun*, A&M, 1987.
- Taxi para 3*. Directed by Orlando Lübbert, Cebra Producciones—Orlando Lübbert Producciones, 2001.
- The Go-Between*. Directed by Joseph Losey, EMI Films, 1971.
- The World Bank. “Gini index (World Bank estimate).” *The World Bank*, data. worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI. Accessed 6 Dec. 2017.
- . “Poverty headcount ratio at national poverty lines (% of population).” *The World Bank*, data. worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.NAHC?locations=CL. Accessed 6 Dec. 2017.
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. United Nations, 1948. www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/index.html.

Velódromo. Directed by Alberto Fuguet, Cinépata—La Nena—4 Avenidas—Adobe Producciones, 2010.

Zambra, Darío. “Las dos décadas de Sanhattan, el barrio más influyente de la capital.” *La Tercera*, 21 Apr. 2013, www.latercera.com/noticia/las-dos-decadas-de-sanhattan-el-barrio-mas-influyente-de-la-capital. Accessed 5 June 2017.