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**THE ORNAMENTATION OF DEMOCRACY: HOW DONALD TRUMP AND
AUGUSTO PINOCHET SHAPED AUTHORITARIANISM WITH THE NEO-LIBERAL
HOME AND MIGRANT MOTHERS**

by

JULIA ALLEN CALAWAY

**SUBMITTED TO SCRIPPS COLLEGE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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**PROFESSOR PÉREZ DE MENDIOLA
PROFESSOR AISENBERG**

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Introduction: America, The Home of the Free

“Parents of 545 Children Separated at the Border Cannot be Found”

- Caitlin Dickerson, New York Times

In April of 2018, Donald Trump signed an executive order mandating a “zero-tolerance” attitude towards immigration, which, in practice, earned itself the title of Family Separation. With the power granted by the Immigration and Nationality Act, Trump brought to practice rigorous enforcement of the United States’ immigration laws.¹ In legal terms, that meant any “alien [who] enters or attempts to enter the country anywhere else...has [also] committed at least the crime of improper entry...and is subject to imprisonment.”² The term “alien” refers to every member that makes up a family—including children of any age.³ While this policy, which dehumanized every person who arrived at the border down to the word chosen to describe them, only lasted three months in an official capacity, the ramifications of its harsh measures are still felt to this day. In 2020, The New York Times reported over 545 cases in which children brought with their parents across the U.S.-Mexico border have yet to be reunited with their children.⁴ Caseworkers who attempted to track down parents of children living in foster care facilities, with “host” parents, or in specialized detention centers for children, all came across the same issue; ICE officers failed to document the locations of the parents who were deported after being separated from their children.⁵ Mothers and fathers were sent on planes or buses at odd hours in the night back to the country which they came from, without a goodbye and without any means of ever contacting them again.

¹ Gregory Korte, “Anatomy of an Executive Order: What President Trump’s Order on Family Separation Does,” *USA Today*, April 28, 2021. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2018/06/21/trump-executive-order-family-separations-border-explained/721466002/>.

² Korte, “Anatomy of an Executive Order.”

³ Korte, “Anatomy of an Executive Order.”

⁴ This number excludes the estimate of 700 cases of family separation unfolding at the border and in ICE detention centers after the policy was over in an official capacity.

⁵ Dickerson, *Parents of 545 Children*, (New York Times Online, 2020).

Information linking a parent to a child, therefore, was disappeared.⁶ Without a name, without a picture, it was almost like the parents never arrived in the United States at all. On one side of the border, live children forced to adapt to the living conditions chosen by a government that sees both them and their parents as aliens, a sub-human classification. On the other side of the border lives the parents, who must re-define what it means to be a mother or father without any guarantee they might see their children ever again.

“ICE, A Whistleblower and Forced Sterilization”

- Jean White, 1A National Public Radio

In September of 2020, Jean White, a reporter at NPR, broke a story exposing the common practice of sterilizing migrant women in an ICE detention center in Georgia.⁷ Dawn Wooten, a nurse, working at the detention center in question, reported as a whistleblower that the center’s chief physician systematically performed hysterectomies on migrant women without their consent. Dawn Wooten recalls migrant women asking her if the ICE doctor was a “uterus collector,” confused why so many women went to the doctor for a routine visit only to return without their sex organs.⁸ The invasive surgery renders a woman infertile, unable to bear children whether she wanted to or not.

“ICE Asked Migrant Parents Whether They Wished to be Separated from their Children”

- Camilo Montoya-Galvez, CBS News

⁶ Dickerson, *Parents of 545 Children*, (New York Times Online, 2020).

⁷ Jenn White, interview with Dawn Wooten, Michelle Brané, Elizabeth Matherne, and Pramila Jayapal, *ICE, A Whistleblower and Forced Sterilization*, 1A NPR, podcast audio, September 22, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2020/09/18/914465793/ice-a-whistleblower-and-forced-sterilization>.

⁸ Jenn White, podcast audio, September 22, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2020/09/18/914465793/ice-a-whistleblower-and-forced-sterilization>.

At the start of 2020, in the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, when the raging virus dominated all news coverage, ICE agents coerced large groups of mothers in detention centers to dissolve their rights to their children. Three years after Trump ended Family Separation as a zero-tolerance policy, ICE continued to practice separating families. Only now did they do so by breaking laws. For the “good and safety of their children,” ICE convinced migrant mothers to sign documents that allowed migrant children to be released from detention centers, where they might be in danger due to high infection rates.⁹ Yet, the children would leave the facility without any pathway to be reunited with their mother.¹⁰ While some migrant mothers evaded the request of ICE agents, many signed away their rights to remain with their child without even knowing. As a tactic, ICE agents presented migrant mothers contracts written in English. ICE, operating under the authority of the United States, wielded language barriers as a political tool, making the language for which they write, in addition to the complicated legal jargon, impossible to understand. In the border space, these migrant mothers could not protect their children with their mother tongue, and, without informed consent, they forever changed the structure of their family.

“Family Separations Push New Protestors to Join Immigration Activists”

- Gillian Flaccus and Amy Taxin, PBS News

When family separation came into effect, immigration activists rallied horrified citizens across the United States to protest against this inhumane policy. The movement to end family separation grabbed the attention of mothers throughout the nation who suddenly felt connected to the plight of immigrants at the border, distraught knowing a child might be taken from their mother. In June of 2018, Gillian Flaccus and Amy Taxin interviewed protestors at a rally in Portland, Oregon, where they asked the crowd of women what lead them to join this march for immigration reform.

⁹ Montoya-Galvez. *Ice Asked Migrant Parents*, (CBSNews, 17 May 2020).

¹⁰ Montoya-Galvez. *Ice Asked Migrant Parents*, (CBSNews, 17 May 2020).

One woman spoke up to say, “I’m a mom too.”¹¹ Thus, she positioned herself in relation to the migrant mothers at the border, expressing a shared understanding and connection to motherhood. Yet, to be as a migrant mother and to be as a mother protected by citizenship live in two different realities, shaping memories of motherhood that cannot be compared.

¹¹ Montoya-Galvez. *Ice Asked Migrant Parents*, (CBSNews, 17 May 2020).

Mothers and Homemaking: A Symbol of Nationalism and Dissension

Memory is collected data transposed through touch, smell, sight, taste, and sound onto the body, encrypted through oral histories, literature, objects, food, and that which exists in the physical realm. Experiences, thus, are resigned to a space, remembered, and re-remembered through an interpretation of subjectivity, of particularities. Migrant mothers create memories which, in turn, shape identity within border spaces, inscribing their experiences on both their bodies and *la Madre Tierra* from which their bodies found life. For, to immigrate or emigrate fractures one's identity rooted in citizenship. Within the home, within *la patria*, mothers in Latin America realize themselves through intergenerational memory embodied through the very family that inhabited the same spaces before her. Gaston Bachelard, in his book *The Poetics of Space*, argues that "life beings...being enclosed, protected, all warm in the bosom of the house."¹² There, a feeling of happiness is "fixed" in space and time.¹³ Bachelard uses the word "bosom" with intention, gendering the home, and therefore the state of being cared for as a woman. Migrant mothers, unable to provide their children with happiness through a home rooted in a particular space, find alternative ways to protect their children at the border, re-building the "bosom of the house" within their bodies. Thus, to be home for migrant mothers and their children is to be in an ever-changing living space.

Conversely, mothering in the United States functions as a set space, intrinsically attached to property and ownership. To be an American mother is to be a product of an established physical space defined by a cold-war era model of a white, Christian household mortgaged through privileged citizenship. The Western home, generated as living propaganda against communist immorality, was built as a fortress to preserve privatized land. Its four walls shielded by a white

¹² Gaston Bachelard. *The Poetics of Space*. (Introduction, Penguin Classics 2014).

¹³ Bachelard, "The House From Cellar to Garret, The Significance of the Hut," V.

picket fence secures the promise of the American dream. The suburbs reflect onto itself an image of sameness. While the patriarchs of the family lived varying lives, based outside of the home in the economic sector, women were meant to be the foundation of the household, acting as a functional object through which the family finds life.¹⁴ Her body is rendered a fixture of the home, acting for the good of others, the nation, and for the purpose of procreating to continue the family line. The ideal of suburban motherhood and family structure, which at its core is structured around the physical space of the home, provided an easy-to-follow model for other nations trying to mimic the economic successes of their Western neighbors. Thus, the structure of the family within conservative, traditional ideals rooted in Christianity became a part of neo-liberal economic and political action abroad. Latin America, a central location for neo-liberal policy, served as a site where such ideas of family, economics, and democracy might be explored. In the perspective of the United States, the southern region of the world was under threat of succumbing to communism. Thus, the U.S., through the actions of the CIA, altered the political and social landscape of Latin America to reflect their own, ushering in an era of dictatorial regimes throughout the continent who were assured to serve capitalistic interest. Chile was no exception.

In 1973, Augusto Pinochet and his military junta took over the capital in Santiago, successfully establishing a military coup following the democratic election of the socialist political leader Salvador Allende. Pinochet and his military were not acting alone, but in accordance with the United States' political directive.¹⁵ Thus, revealing the decrepit foundation of democracy for which the United States prides itself, one that supports dictatorial regimes who murder, rape, and

¹⁴ Margaret Power, *Right-Wing Women: From Conservatives to Extremists Around the World*, *Right-Wing Women, Sexuality, and Politics in Chile during the Pinochet Dictatorship, 1973-1990*, (The Pennsylvania State University, 2002), 273.

¹⁵ José Santos Herceg, "Los centros de detención y/o tortura en Chile," *Revista Izquierdas*, November 26, 2015, <https://journals.openedition.org/izquierdas/764?lang=en>.

disappear those who do not act in the interest of the state or its economic goals.¹⁶ Yet, the perception of the United States as a place of liberty and justice for all erases its entanglements with authoritarianism and human rights abuses across the globe, allowing the nation to maintain its image of freedom. The impenetrable façade of the United States as a pioneer of justice and economic mobility, one that hides an interiority of a nation founded on slavery, eradication, and oppression, entices those from poorer countries, who deal with both the economic and social fallout of colonialism and extractive-capitalism, to arrive at the southern border between Mexico and the U.S. to ask for entrance into a nation that will treat them no differently. For, the countries from which migrants arrive in the global south are the same countries for which the United States tested their powers of democracy and capitalism on and subsequently failed.

Today migrant mothers in the United States, lack home and citizenship as refugees fleeing from violence, repression, and political torture, leaving them with only a body to house their memories and understanding of the self. Migrant women from Latin America seeking refuge in North America are purposefully made invisible in the social imaginary as their relationship to womanhood, and therefore motherhood exists in the ever-moving space of their body, a direct challenge to capitalism. They live as physical representations of a failed colonial project in Latin America and the weaknesses of western ideals; thus, their bodies are wielded by the government as a weapon of war. Upon arrival at the border, if the migrant mother is “privileged” enough to be granted a path to citizenship, she will be ushered into subordinate positions within the White, familial structure of the nation. Either she is invisibilized within the realm of domesticity in the suburban household, meant to clean up the home dirtied by the family or within ICE detention centers, meant to clean up the border dirtied by poor immigration policies and failed foreign policy.

¹⁶ José Santos Herceg, “Los centros de detención y/o tortura en Chile,” *Revista Izquierdas*, November 26, 2015, <https://journals.openedition.org/izquierdas/764?lang=en>.

To Be in the Coloniality of Being

For the migrant mother, trauma manifests through her relationship to the systems built and reinforced throughout history by the active practice of colonization as well as the residual impacts of its legacy. The colonizer or the actor in realizing a colonial state is an entity that originates in one territory only to settle and take control of a place that does not belong to them. Thus, to colonize is to assert the presence of people, ideas, culture, and politics in a place where they should not be. The foreign colonizer believes himself the rightful leader of his settled lands, a belief that originates in Western, Anglo-European male superiority. With such empowerment, colonization thrived as an extractive practice, consuming and profiting off of land, natural resources, and forced labor.

Nelson Maldonado-Torres in his essay *On the Coloniality of Being* explores what it means *to be* as a person from a colonized land and community. He identifies the framework “the coloniality of being” in order to differentiate coloniality from colonialism.¹⁷ While the legacy of colonialism persists today through neoliberal political and economic practices, the coloniality of being refers to a different manifestation of colonization defined by,

“long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, [that also] define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations.”¹⁸

The coloniality of being is founded on the notion of racial inferiority and subjugation created by the conquerors of the Americas. The racial hierarchy of the colonizer established a system that valued human life based on its ability to function as a resource for the newly freed

¹⁷ Nelson Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality of Being: Contributions to the development of a concept,” (Cultural Studies v21 n2-3 (200703): 240-270), 243.

¹⁸ Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality,” 243.

world market.¹⁹ Within this coloniality of being, Maldonado-Torres explores what it means *to be* or to live within a coloniality of being by outlining modernist conceptions of the self for differing perspectives. First, he refers to the European philosopher Heidegger and his modernist interpretation of being, which “is characterized by the idea that Being is not a being, an entity, or a thing, but the Beings of being, that is, something like the general horizon of understanding for all beings.”²⁰ Therefore, the distinction between Being and beings is an ontological one.²¹ Being, following Heidegger’s philosophy, cannot be defined by a collective experience constructed by the divine or divine right, but instead can be defined by “resoluteness” that only arrives upon “the possibility which is inescapably one’s own..., death.”²²

Though I agree with the universality of Heidegger’s argument that the act of Being reaches its fullest expression upon one’s death or the conceptualization of death, his belief that Being is constructed outside of divine right is a limited one, as it applies only the colonizer’s state of being.²³ Divine right is the right of the white man, therefore it may be used or discarded at the discretion of the colonial state.²⁴ For to be in *Being* as a colonizer is to exist in a reality where one is allowed to proclaim “I think, therefore I AM.”²⁵ Yet, for those living within the coloniality of being, the colonizer thinks so that they can be, creating a state of Being ruled by “I think, therefore YOU ARE.”²⁶

Fanonian philosophies and meditations of the self, specifically of black people, people of color, and colonized people, furthers Heidegger’s conceptualization of Being, but within the

¹⁹ Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality,” 244.

²⁰ Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality,” 249.

²¹ Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality,” 249.

²² Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality,” 250.

²³ Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality,” 250.

²⁴ Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality,” 249.

²⁵ Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality,” 252.

²⁶ Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality,” 252.

context of a coloniality of being. Fanon's direct challenge to European ontological notions of being inspired Maldonado-Torres' foundation theories on *being* within a coloniality of being. Maldonado-Torres is then able to define the three categories of what it means to be as a— trans-ontological difference, ontological difference, and sub-ontological or ontological colonial difference.²⁷ Trans-ontological difference is defined by the “difference between Being and what is beyond Being; or Being and exteriority.”²⁸ Ontological difference is the “difference between Beings and being,” while sub-ontological difference is the “difference between Being and what lies below Being.”²⁹ For the purpose of this thesis, I will be focusing my attention on the sub-ontological difference as it is the foundation from which the coloniality of being forms. Sub-ontology is a difference that is “negatively marked,” meaning those who fall into this categorization are considered “dispensable as well as a target of rape and murder.”³⁰ For a sub-ontological difference to become fully realized, death and violence are sacrosanct. Thus, the only way to form the self in a coloniality of being is to also survive trauma. Trauma is an inherent part of living within a coloniality of being as the act of colonization relied on the reinforcement of white superiority through the infliction of social, physical, and mental violence against black, brown, indigenous, and “othered” communities.

Like a child raised by abusive parents in a toxic household, a person with internalized colonialism came into knowing themselves, and therefore expressing themselves with an altered perception of the world.³¹ Psychologists found that experiencing life in survival mode as a result of trauma “partially removes the mind from the inner states of the body.”³² This infliction isolates

²⁷ Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality,” 253.

²⁸ Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality,” 253.

²⁹ Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality,” 253.

³⁰ Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality,” 253.

³¹ Bessel van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score, Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (Penguin Random House, 2015), 95.

³² Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 95.

traumatized people from the true nature of their minds and bodies, leading them to “superimpose” their trauma onto people, places, and objects around them.³³ A house built on coloniality is not a house at all, but a trick mirror reflecting fantasy onto its residents. To question the fantasy is to question one’s own reality, to question what one sees so clearly in front of them. If the mirror is shattered and there is no reflection, how is one to know they are real?

³³ Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 95.

To Naturalize into a Coloniality of Being

To naturalize was first defined by the French to describe the transfer of rights and privileges of a native-born citizen onto a foreigner.³⁴ The word gained popularity in the Renaissance, when peoples and goods traversed borders following the rise of mercantilism.³⁵ Naturalization, thus, became associated with the merging of new political and social relationships between foreign lands, forming a new understanding of what birthright and territory meant in the collective conscious.³⁶ Biologically, to naturalize connotes the establishment of a plant or animal in a region which it is not indigenous. Thus, for a foreign good to undergo the process of naturalization, it must first disrupt its new ecosystem while undergoing a cycle of self-restoration, essentially healing itself while healing the earth around it.³⁷ What was once unnatural for a land becomes natural through adaptation.

Jack Z. Bratich in his essay *Foucault, Cultural Studies, and Governmentality* cites that “culture is nothing but the sum of the different classificatory systems and discursive formations, on which language draws in order to give meaning to things.”³⁸ Therefore, to naturalize or undergo the process of naturalization can no longer be classified, understood, or discussed within its original definition. Today, naturalization derives meanings through its relationship to the word native. The colonizer utilized the derogatory designation “native” in reference to the indigenous population of the Americas, a land they considered themselves “discoverers” of. While the word “native” implies having origins in a certain geographical space, people with this classification were

³⁴ Priscilla Wald, “Naturalization,” in *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*, eds. By Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler (NYU Press, Third Edition).

³⁵ Wald, “Naturalization.”

³⁶ Wald, “Naturalization.”

³⁷ Wald, “Naturalization.”

³⁸ Tony Bennet, “Culture and Governmentality,” in *Foucault, Cultural Studies, and Governmentality* Foucault eds. Jack Z. Bratich, Jeremy Packer, and Cameron McCarthy (Albany: SUNY Press, 2003), 52.

treated as a threat to the process of naturalization in a newly formed colonial state. The “native” was a threat to the colonizer rooting themselves in foreign soil and succeeding to sustain life.

The foundation for the house, a physical representation of the family structure within the United States is by no means natural or “native,” yet is considered as natural as the mountain and water.³⁹ Colonization corroded the “native” by acting as an intrusive species, taking root not to restore or heal, but to invade. Therefore, the United States was founded on the construction of the “nation” rather than “nature.”⁴⁰ To be natural was to be American. To be naturalized was to be Americanized.⁴¹

The act of becoming naturalized into the nation is but a bureaucratic process, a flat act that tricks the eye into seeing something that is not there. The pledge of allegiance reads, “I pledge Allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with Liberty and Justice for all.”⁴² The pledge provides an auditory experience to materialize the notion “I think, therefore I am” because to think you are American means that, therefore you are American. The pledge is a “trompe l’oeil,” an artful design to provide dimension where there is none, a trick of the eye. To proclaim the words “with Liberty and Justice for all” is a privilege for migrants who obtain citizenship by legal means. In order to become a part of the nation, every immigrant must recite those words, hand to their heart, eyes on the flag. In that moment, the American dream comes to fruition. Yet, for those who cross the border without formal documentation, without a clear path to formalized citizenship, there are no words they might utter to usher themselves into the new country in which they reside. There is no “trompe l’oeil” that might allow migrants without documentation to have even an illusion of liberty, let alone any

³⁹ Bachelard, “The House From Cellar to Garret, The Significance of the Hut,” in *The Poetics of Space*, V.

⁴⁰ Wald, “Naturalization.”

⁴¹ Wald, “Naturalization.”

⁴² Secretary of State, “The Pledge of Allegiance.” <https://www.sos.wa.gov/flag/pledge.aspx>.

chance for justice at all as these migrants disrupt the political and social ecosystem within the United States. By evading legal avenues into the United States, migrants crossing borders weaken the “aspirations” of the nation, challenging what it means to have access to a country and what it means to belong to a place.⁴³ Thus, they are perceived as a threat by political forces and characterized as such to its constituents.

Judith Butler in her collection of essays *Frames of War: When is life Grievable?*, says that “a living figure outside the norms of life not only becomes [a] problem [of the nation] to be managed by normativity, but seems to be that which normativity is bound to reproduce: it is living, but not a life.”⁴⁴ In the gaze of the nation, migrant mothers from Latin America and the Caribbean, without documentation, are not the norm, but instead the other. Their right to live is reducible to their sub-ontological difference, meaning that while they have a right to live, their life is not their own. Outside a migrant mother’s country of origin, she is allowed *to be* as a living person confined in particular spaces. There, she is meant to play a singular role. The migrant mother, restrained by a coloniality of being, is a nanny, a housekeeper, an agricultural worker, a cook, and a cleaner.⁴⁵ Otherwise, the nation imprisons her in ICE detention centers, rendering her invisible.

To live is to work is to die. This is the cyclical nature of the coloniality of being, one that migrant mothers subscribe to in order to provide their children with a better life than their own. Yet, this “better” life they are in search for is often not better at all, but rather a re-manifestation of trauma, violence, and repression experienced in their home countries. Herzfeld in his book *The Social Production of Indifference* states that “infliction of extreme psychological cruelty is more often reserved for...women who have dared to take an active role...toward the improvement of

⁴³ Wald, “Naturalization.”

⁴⁴ Judith Butler, “Introduction: Precarious Life, Grievable life,” in *Frames of War: when is life grievable?* (London, 2009), 8.

⁴⁵ These occupations are considered to be in service of the white family.

socioeconomic conditions in their countries.”⁴⁶ In the United States, the migrant mother is manipulated into believing in economic mobility, in the pursuit of self-improvement if she works hard enough through the guise of the American dream. In reality, she is punished for pursuing such goals, which ICE detention centers inflict through a combination of psychological and physical warfare.

⁴⁶ Michael Herzfeld, *The Social Production of Indifference* (The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 313.

Understanding Democracy Through the Home

“A house constitutes a body of images that gives mankind proofs or illusions of stability. We are constantly re-imagining its reality: to distinguish all of these images would be to describe the soul of the house; it would mean developing a veritable psychology of the house.”

- Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*

The United States constructs motherhood alongside the home. Home defines mothers the way mothers define home, cementing a symbiotic relationship. To the home, the mother is like an appliance. She is an object that allows the family to function, an unmoving, unchanging fixture meant to maintain homeostasis in her environment. If she deviates from her function, the mother disrupts not only the family, but the nation for which she silently upholds. For, the mother is where life begins, being enclosed, protected in the bosom of the house.

Hannah Ardent in her book *The Human Condition* traces the meanings of *familia*, the Latin root word for family.⁴⁷ *Familia*, in its original connotation, signifies property. Family is a culmination of a field, a house, money, and slaves to sustain the therefore stated field and house.⁴⁸ Ardent then elaborates that while “property” is not a direct path to family, or the modern meaning of the word family, property allows one to locate and settle in the world. becoming part of a political body and achieving validity in the public sphere.⁴⁹ Therefore, private property becomes indistinguishable from the family who owns it because within that property a family gains privacy; and such privacy allows one to define, understand, and come into oneself.⁵⁰ Private property allows the white, heteropatriarchy of the family to inhabit a trans-ontological difference rather than a sub-

⁴⁷ Hannah Ardent, *Human Condition*, pg. 107.

⁴⁸ Hannah Ardent, *Human Condition*, pg. 107.

⁴⁹ Hannah Ardent, *Human condition*, pg. 61.

⁵⁰ Hannah Ardent, *Human condition*, pg. 61.

ontological difference. He may think, so that the family may BE, though the space for which that might unfold is limited to the borders of the private property.

The patriarch of the family, as well as the matriarch within the context of the white, western construct of the nuclear family represent a trans-ontological state of being within the privacy of their home. Gaston Bachelard in his book, *Poetics of Space*, divides the space of the home vertically, analyzing the structure from the top to the bottom. He believes the home exists in polarity for the function of inhabiting the space is experienced differently depending on how one trans/cends up and down the staircases or a ladder into the attic and basement).⁵¹ Bachelard proposes that “the dreamer constructs and reconstructs the upper stories and the attic until they are well constructed.”⁵² The language Bachelard chooses in reference to the dreamer and their ability to access the “upper stories” of the house reflects the notion of a vertical momentum which reminds us of the concept of upward mobility within the United States or within capitalism, to be exact. *Upward* connotes one’s ability to move toward a higher place or level, that one may ascend past others whether that be morally, financially, or religiously. Thus, *upward* is exclusionary, reserved for those who possess *mobility* and “real/achievable” dreams. The aforementioned concept of *mobility* will be expanded on later in this chapter, for the purpose of clarity and synthesis of the argument. For the time being, let us remember that to understand mobility in the home and nation of the United States is to understand how movement is directed and perceived and more particularly in relation to the “dream,” a complicated issue requiring its own, in-depth analysis. For now, the term *upward* and *dreamers* are to be unpacked, in relation to the immigrant mother and her positionality within the home.⁵³

⁵¹ Bachelard, “The House From Cellar to Garret, The Significance of the Hut,” V.

⁵² Bachelard, “The House From Cellar to Garret, The Significance of the Hut,” V.

⁵³ The term home and nation will be used interchangeably throughout this chapter with the understanding that home is both a physical and metaphorical space within the nation that reflects the nation back onto itself.

In a trans-ontological difference, the so-called *dreamer* inhabits the house as though they are an architect, building up the space continually, floor by floor until their own “dreams become blurred.”⁵⁴ Or, until they can no longer perceive the basement as the foundation of the home, but instead a cellar for which to store that which they no longer want in their purview. For there, in the basement, lives the sub-ontological difference of being. The basement becomes the space in the home where the person living within a coloniality of being is allowed to exist as part of the architectural familial structure—separate and hidden, one that impedes any type of intimacy. In this basement, a space isolated from light and air, dug into the earth, “darkness prevails both day and night.”⁵⁵ This is where the nation stores its anxieties, including, but not limited to anti-blackness, xenophobia, racism, and “perverted acts in war” like murder, rape, and slavery.⁵⁶ Therefore, this is where the nation also stores the immigrant mother from Latin America for her positionality is that of a sub-ontological difference. Though she maintains the foundation of the home, living closest to the earth, she is invisible, hidden away as a result of neo-liberal, domestic enslavement of the other.⁵⁷

From an outside view, gazing upon the house, one sees the foundation of the home as the first story, a space inhabited by the white mother. In her kitchen, living room, and entertaining space she roams freely, cooking and cleaning to maintain order within the more public realm of the home. The white mother embodies the spirit of the home as her essence and a sense of purpose are valued as though she is part of the en/lightened physical structure of the property. She exudes foundational stability, almost as if she herself is/were the ground for which the family lies. However, this perspective is a limited one. For, the white mother cannot uphold the household

⁵⁴ Bachelard, “The House From Cellar to Garret, The Significance of the Hut,” VI.

⁵⁵ Bachelard, “The House From Cellar to Garret, The Significance of the Hut,” VI.

⁵⁶ Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality,” 256.

⁵⁷ Bachelard, “The House From Cellar to Garret, The Significance of the Hut,” VI.

herself. She is supported by the migrant woman—or the black domestic worker—who maintains the structural integrity of the home, the basement, onto which the en/lightened ground is built. Though the migrant woman is not considered “legal,” so therefore not “natural” within the United States, she is the invisible force that allows the home to “achieve totality through depth.”⁵⁸

Bachelard continues his description of the home as a space of poetic understanding as the seasons change the landscape around it. He suggests that in the winter, when the home is covered in snow, the façade is reduced to the outside world as “nothing,” given “a single color to the entire universe.”⁵⁹ While fall, summer, and spring expose the home as an ever-changing entity, when flowers bloom and leaves change color, winter blankets the landscape in snow. The monotony that snow creates for the visual, where all one sees is whiteness reflected back onto them, is the same template for which the suburban, nuclear family models their own familial structure. Therefore, whiteness in the American household is the same as the snow, which “covers all tracks, blurs the road, muffles every sound, [and] conceals all colors.”⁶⁰ The particularities for which each person or family inhabits a space are whitewashed by an ever-growing blanket of powdered ice layered again and again by the nuclear, Western family. American democracy resembles the monotony of the suburban family and home, invisibilizing difference among its constituents which, in turn, maintains the illusion of equality among citizens. John Dunn, in his essay “Capitalist Democracy: elective affinity or beguiling illusion?” wonders if “modern capitalist democracy” is “simply a system of political authorization” or if it actually offers a “coherent approach to formatting deliberation...of public choice.”⁶¹ He continues by describing America’s modern

⁵⁸ Bachelard, “The House From Cellar to Garret, The Significance of the Hut,” V.

⁵⁹ Bachelard, “The House From Cellar to Garret, The Significance of the Hut,” II.

⁶⁰ Bachelard, “The House From Cellar to Garret, The Significance of the Hut,” V.

⁶¹ John M. Dunn, “Capitalist Democracy: elective affinity or beguiling illusion?” *Daedalus: Journal of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences*, no.13 Issue 3 (2007):10, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431010371751>.

conceptualization of democracy as one that only empowers the individual if power among citizens is equalized because only then may men and women better their condition in the capitalist system by “producing, selling, and buying” equitably.⁶² Yet, just like the home, the notion of sameness and equality is only a façade, one that may be shoveled away to reveal differentiation and multiplicity of the interior space.

Only when spring arrives, and the soil around the home populates with plants and species for which naturalized into the land seasons before, does differentiation between the levels of the home become apparent. The melting of snow reveals the break in the earth where the basement of the home is buried, showing the layered effect that provides a home with stability. In the light of spring, when life becomes realized once again after the freeze, can those who live in the basement of the nation perceive daytime, as sunlight seeps through the cracks of the home’s foundation. There, tucked away from the wandering eyes of the suburban neighborhood watch can migrant mothers and their families reside, only to be seen if one knows what they are looking for. The hidden nature of the basement, as a place of storage, where one’s forgotten things live past their expiration, is represented in the metaphorical house of nation by the construction of immigration detention facilities.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) forces Migrant mothers and their families into political prisons located in rural regions across the United States. The nation stores its xenophobia in such immigration facilities, allowing the fear of those who have been labeled “illegal” to trickle into the very earth which its people find life. In such places, the figure of the “stranger” or the foreigner becomes the “enemy” per Etienne Balibar’s analysis in his essay “At

⁶² John M. Dunn, “Capitalist Democracy: elective affinity or beguiling illusion?” *Daedalus: Journal of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences*, Summer 2007, 16-17.

the Border of Citizenship: A Democracy in Translation.”⁶³ The hyper-militarized Mexico-U.S. border is the first place where the migrant mother is transformed from the stranger to the enemy. Only then does the migrant mother become a threat to the integrity of the American home because she suddenly makes herself visible in the public preview outside of any subservient, domesticated role in the white household. ICE becomes responsible for domesticating the migrant mother and her children within the home of the nation, making her invisible to the outside world.

After crossing the border, the migrant mother is shuffled to immigration detention centers, the basement of the nation, because to allow her entrance into the United States, with immigration hearings scheduled in the future would allow her the opportunity to naturalize into a more informal form of citizenship. Migrant mothers exist in the United States unattached to a nation-state’s citizenship, leaving them without the right to move freely through territories. Instead, the migrant mother is confined to a space that grants her no rights in the United States nor in her home country, positioning her in a transitory place where she is neither here nor there. Therefore, in a sense, the migrant mother never leaves the border space. She is perpetually displaced in a federally run institution, rendered stateless and immobile. Within immigration detention centers, the migrant mother has no dreams to construct. The structure in which she is detained has no upper stories to build her American dream as promised, though the coloniality of being perpetuates the belief that her dreams are real and achievable through vertical movement. In reality, the home for which she is confined is flat with an impenetrable ceiling. She may knock on the ceiling from the inside or even ask those on the outside to help her break it down in order to forge a space to build a staircase for her and her family. She is even permitted to daydream of this escape. Yet, despite her perseverance and impenetrable will, the migrant mother will never be able to truly live out her

⁶³ Etienne Balibar, “At the Borders of Citizenship: A Democracy in Translation?” *European Journal of Social Theory*, August, 2010, 319.

dream of ascending and descending the stairs she builds in her fantasy. In time, the torture and misery facilitated by ICE in detention centers will deconstruct any daydream of home in the United States that might be the migrant mothers and hers alone, not because of her lack of trying, but because of her trans-ontological difference.⁶⁴

Donald Trump began his political career resurfacing the xenophobia stored in the attic of the white, suburban household. Trump's zero-tolerance, anti-immigrant rhetoric "rationalized" the fears hidden in the attic of the nation's home, materializing daydreams preserved by each generation.⁶⁵ By bringing his own xenophobia and racism to the first floor of the house, to be presented to any and all that entered without shame, Trump empowered a coalition, primarily composed of poor, uneducated white families with little economic opportunity, to do the same. He In many ways, Donald Trump used the birther movement questioning Barack Obama's citizenship status in 2011 launched himself as a crusader against "illegal" immigration. The birther movement represents the ground level of the house (and nation). Within the mother's realm, the first floor of the home, she gives birth in the light of day, so that those around her may see her. When the baby is born, it is the doctor, historically a man, who holds the child as it takes its first breath or releases their first cough. Then, does the doctor declare the baby's gender, and in a sense, their personhood. Though the father typically waits in his upstairs domain of the house, he comes to the first floor to see the child for himself, further ushering the baby into the world as a unit of the family, and therefore a unit of the nation. Yet, when that child is born in the basement, where black and brown citizens of the United States are meant to remain, invisible as the foundation of America's historical economy, they are not ushered into the nation through the nuclear family. This fact is

⁶⁴ Bachelard, "The House From Cellar to Garret, The Significance of the Hut," I.

⁶⁵ Bachelard, "The House From Cellar to Garret, The Significance of the Hut," V.

further emphasized by Obama's mother raising him as a "single," parent, therefore he lacked validation from the patriarch of the family.

Trump's "war on immigration" was a strategic political ploy. He distracted Americans from focusing on "internal enemies" like white terrorists and authoritarian governance in the name of protecting his citizens from *the outside* and *the other*.⁶⁶ Some of Trumps' more notorious comments on migrants crossing the border without legal papers include "these aren't people...these are animals," and "[migrants from Mexico are] rapist [who bring] crime."⁶⁷ He concludes his comments by stating that "some, [he]assumes, are good people."⁶⁸ The migrant as a criminal, as an intrinsically violent person visibilizes the migrant as someone to be fearful of. While Trump promotes a hyper-visibilization of the "bad immigrant" who is typically gendered as a man, he practices the invisibilization of the migrant mother who is neither bad nor good, but instead disappeared from the public preview.

Such invisibilization of the migrant mother, in contrast to the hyper-visibilization of the migrant father from Latin America, is due to the fact that the migrant mother poses a unique threat to the relationship between property and family. The home is considered a bedrock of American identity and American democracy. Bedrock is used deliberately as it implies a household is sedentary and unmoving. Home is a fixed space, a way of preserving history, even when such history is founded on slavery, exploitation, and outdated power structures. As much as the space assigned to her is the basement metaphorically but mostly in reality, fundamentally the migrant mother stands in opposition to the structure of the American household for she is a moving entity,

⁶⁶ Balibar, "Capitalist Democracy: elective affinity or beguiling illusion?" 316.

⁶⁷ Alan Gomez and Gregory Korte, "Trump ramps up rhetoric on undocumented immigrants: 'These aren't people. There are animals,'" USA Today, May 2018, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2018/05/16/trump-immigrants-animals-mexico-democrats-sanctuary-cities/617252002/>.

⁶⁸ Alan Gomez and Gregory Korte, "Trump ramps up rhetoric on undocumented immigrants: 'These aren't people. There are animals.'"

providing home for her family as she transitions through time and space. Her body is her home; thus, it is alive and ever-changing. Hernández-Albújar in her thesis, *Narratives of Identity and Motherhood Among Latin American Migrant Women*, states that being as a migrant mother in a new country breaks “away from the notion of “being” as something static, natural, and intrinsic to the person,” but rather becomes a conceptualization of identity that “moves from the place around which a person centers his/her life, to a “stable and coherent ensemble of characteristics defining groups or persons.”⁶⁹ Therefore, the migrant family, with the migrant mother at the center, is not a private entity that is defined and understood through the land which they settle.⁷⁰ If the family is not a reflection of private property, it is not a reflection of the desires of the nation, rendering the family a threat or dangerous to the fragility of democracy in America.

In, *Democracy and the Foreigner*, Bonnie Honig states that

“democratic regimes implicated in violences that could delegitimize them may risk their democratic power in order to restore or preserve its innocence, by telling themselves stories about themselves in which a [scapegoatlike] foreign-founder takes the people’s violences upon himself.”⁷¹

In the United States, the migrant mother and her body are the “scapegoatlike” foreigner who puts at risk the fragile facade that is democracy within an authoritarian nation. The trauma that migrant mothers hold in their bodies creates a roadmap for which to understand the United States for her body reads like a blueprint for the sub-ontological home, pointing to a faulty foundation like democracy to the nation. Thus, the cells and cages of the ICE detention centers

⁶⁹ Yolanda Hernández-Albújar, “Narratives of Identity and Motherhood Among Latin American Migrant Women” (MA Thesis, University of Florida, 2004), 125, Downloadable Archival Material.

⁷⁰ Hannah Ardent, *The Human Condition*, Second Edition (The University of Chicago Press, 2018), 61.

⁷¹ Bonnie Honig, *Democracy and the Foreigner*, (Princeton University Press, 2001), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt7t3z7>, 107.

become a room in the house of the nation for which she must cross a border to be allowed entrance to. Yet, her entrance is not one of ease. The sub-ontological home, which resembles a prison more than a habitable domestic space, is padlocked. This is the unfortunate reality for migrant mothers who arrive at the front door of the nation who believe, within the context of the coloniality of being, that the United States is a place of hope and opportunity, a place where the doormat reads *Welcome*, only to find that hard work and perseverance is not enough to open the door for oneself. Migrant mothers must decide whether their “home is here,” where they have brought their children for a better life, at the expense of their own or if their home is back with their families, in their country of origin, where they might be supported.⁷²

Hernández-Albújar found that migrant mothers find themselves “tangled into webs of political power and structural inequality,” which ultimately takes a toll on the mothers’ ability to recognize herself in her personhood.⁷³ Her inability to recognize herself, trapped in a coloniality of being which traumatizes and re-traumatizes the individual, means that the migrant mother becomes susceptible to abuse within the migration process. Institutions like ICE prey on these women who are “re-defining [their] identit[ies] in the migration context...[which] calls for a balance among multiple understandings of one’s self at different times and spaces,” a vulnerable place to be in, even under the best of circumstances.⁷⁴ The United States utilizes ICE and its power to invisibilize migrant women once they enter the U.S. by stripping them of their right to settle in their new surroundings. For if migrant mothers establish “home” within the United States, they become embedded within the fabric of the nation, establishing their unique version of family that may warp the fragile façade of what home means to American identity.

⁷² Hernández-Albújar, “Narratives of Identity and Motherhood Among Latin American Migrant Women” 137.

⁷³ Hernández-Albújar, “Narratives of Identity and Motherhood Among Latin American Migrant Women” 125.

⁷⁴ Hernández-Albújar, “Narratives of Identity and Motherhood Among Latin American Migrant Women” 125.

Organizing Motherhood and the Family Within the Nation

“Deported parents may lose kids to adoption, investigation finds.”⁷⁵

NBC, October 9th, 2018.⁷⁶

“Chile’s stolen Children: ‘I was tricked into handing over my baby.’”⁷⁷

BBC, September 26th, 2019.

From 1973 to 1990, the span of Pinochet’s dictatorial regime, over twenty thousand Chilean children were adopted by foreign couples. However, activists consider such number a conservative estimate, one that excludes the countless children adopted domestically. Wealthy parents abroad, specifically in countries like Sweden, Denmark, and the Netherlands, believed their choice to adopt infants from Chile was a humanitarian one, sold the narrative that these children were of poor mothers and families who did not have the means nor the desire to raise their kin. Yet, this was only a fabrication constructed by the Pinochet regime to further their political agenda, one that relied on control, suppression, and fear.

Declassified documents from the Pinochet era report countless stories where newborn children were ripped away from their mothers only to be given to strangers. These mothers were typically poor, single moms of indigenous origins or of the politically left.⁷⁸ The BBC, in a report regarding forced adoption of children, follows the story of Alejandro who was adopted by Dutch parents who believed they were helping a poor child find a better life. In this article, Alejandro searches for his mother in Chile. When they are finally reunited, he finds out the truth. His mother, Sara Jineo, was fourteen when she became pregnant, living in a rural area of southern Chile. Post-

⁷⁵ The Associated Press, “Deported parents may lose kids to adoption, investigation finds,” *NBC News*, October 9, 2018, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/deported-parents-may-lose-kids-adoption-investigation-finds-n918261>.

⁷⁶ Jane Chambers, “Chile’s stolen children: ‘I was tricked into handing over my baby’,” *BBC News*, September 26, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-48929112>.

⁷⁷ Jane Chambers, “Chile’s stolen children: ‘I was tricked into handing over my baby’.”

⁷⁸ Jane Chambers, “Chile’s stolen children: ‘I was tricked into handing over my baby’.”

partum, Alejandro's mother brought her newborn to the local hospital to be examined. There, he was taken away from her, and she was told her son had become ill, died, and his body already disposed of. Alejandro's mother began to scream. The doctors sedated her. She did not wake up for another three days.⁷⁹

NBC News followed the stories of Araceli Ramos Bonilla, a mother who crossed the border with her two-year-old daughter, Alexa. Upon arrival in Texas Araceli was arrested and separated from her daughter, told that she would never see Alexa again. Alexa was then given to a foster family whom a judge subsequently gave guardianship rights over, creating a pathway for full adoption of Alexa. NBC reporters quote Araceli saying, "this girl, she was here, in my womb...we were meant to be together. Always."⁸⁰ The United States government did not see the mother-daughter duo in the same light. ICE labeled Alexa an "unaccompanied minor," meaning she arrived in the United States alone while Araceli was coerced into signing documents that allowed ICE to deport her without her daughter. Araceli signed over her rights to Alexa written in a language she could not read. She recalls an agent "putting his hand on" hers and forcing her to sign.⁸¹ Araceli's story of forced family separation is not an unfamiliar one. She is one of the thousands of mothers who have been manipulated and coerced into giving away the rights to her own child, only for that child to be put in the care of Christian foster households.

The United States' treatment of immigrants arriving at the Mexico-U.S. border, particularly under Donald Trump, mirrors that of Pinochet and his military regime's treatment of politically dissident citizens. The narratives of Araceli Ramos Bonilla and Sara Jineo parallel one another in a striking manner, bringing to light how forced adoptions, kidnapping, and familial abuse became

⁷⁹ Jane Chambers, "Chile's stolen children: 'I was tricked into handing over my baby'."

⁸⁰ Jane Chambers, "Chile's stolen children: 'I was tricked into handing over my baby'."

⁸¹ Jane Chambers, "Chile's stolen children: 'I was tricked into handing over my baby'."

normalized under the two authoritarian leaders. The two countries and two leaders were separated by what some consider different continents and distanced politically by decades, however their methods of maintaining power function similarly. Ximena Bunster-Burotto, in her chapter, “Surviving Beyond Fear: Women and Torture in Latin America,” identifies the authoritarian political apparatus as a state-sanctioned torturer who is protected and supported by the government.⁸² We see this unfolding in both Chile and the United States under Pinochet and Trump, leaders who gave their unadulterated support to governmentally funded organizations meant to terrorize and invade the social landscape of their countries.

DINA (Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional) functioned as Pinochet’s secret police, composed of over twenty-thousand agents responsible for the suppression of any subversive behavior. DINA agents operated as invisible enforcers, kidnapping political dissidents and transferring them to secret detention centers where they tortured, raped, murdered, and disappeared.⁸³ Though DINA operated as a secret organization, invisible as a political entity, it’s military and police operatives embedded themselves in both the body and psyche of the Chilean population by functioning primarily as a “terrorizing force.”⁸⁴ DINA and ICE (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement) operate similarly in that respect. Though ICE is legitimized officially as a subset of the U.S. government, both organizations established themselves through the systematic identification of women and their families through “names, address[es], and family composition” to then classify such people as “enemies” of the state.⁸⁵ When Bunster-Burrotto states that the two state torturers “identified” women and families with their address—she means

⁸² Bunster-Burotto. “Surviving Beyond Fear: Women and Torture in Latin America,” 297.

⁸³ Juan de Onis, “Secret Police Agency Is Abolished in Chile,” *Special to The New York Times*, August 13, 1977, <https://www.nytimes.com/1977/08/13/archives/secret-police-agency-is-abolished-in-chile-chile-disbands-its.html>.

⁸⁴ Bunster-Burotto. “Surviving Beyond Fear: Women and Torture in Latin America,” 298.

⁸⁵ Bunster-Burotto. “Surviving Beyond Fear: Women and Torture in Latin America,” 298.

this quite literally. Women and mothers in Chile were tracked down to their residences in order to “force confessions, elicit information, or to punish” if they were deemed to be acting against the interests of the state.⁸⁶ Their bodies become inextricably linked to their home, sending a message that if their home can be invaded, so can their bodies and so can their families.

The official website for the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement boasts a historical section, available for public viewing on ICE.gov. There, they explain why the U.S. government re-structured ICE in 2003 to become what it is understood as today. Congress granted ICE “a unique combination of civil and criminal authorities” as a means “to better protect national security and public safety in answer to the tragic events of 9/11...[with a primary] mission to promote homeland security and public safety.”⁸⁷ What ICE excludes from their narrative is their power to surveil, track down, and detain anyone considered a threat to the homeland, or a threat to the appearance of the supposed democratic nation they serve. With a budget of eight billion dollars, funding more than 20,000 law enforcement officers around 400 offices in the country, ICE systematically tracks down migrants without proper documentation to their homes and places of work to then detain and deport them as quickly as possible.⁸⁸ The New York Times reported a story in 2019 titled “How ICE Picks Its Targets in the Surveillance Age” which highlights the story of twenty-two migrants disappeared from Washington State’s Long Beach Peninsula located in Pacific County. There, ICE watched migrants working at the ports and oyster boats for weeks before workers and their families, who had been part of the community for decades, began to vanish. The New York Times reported twenty-two local arrests within weeks, including the arrest of a mother, Gladys Díaz, who was tricked by ICE agents on Facebook Market Place into

⁸⁶ Bunster-Buratto. “Surviving Beyond Fear: Women and Torture in Latin America,” 298.

⁸⁷ U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, *History of ICE*, (Ice.gov), <https://www.ice.gov/history>.

⁸⁸ U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, *History of ICE*, (Ice.gov), <https://www.ice.gov/history>.

delivering them a handmade piñata in a parking lot near her house. When Galdy Díaz arrived at the drop-off location to what was supposed to be an easy exchange with a friendly neighbor, she was met by two ICE agents waiting to arrest her in front of her young daughters.⁸⁹ Under former president Donald Trump's Executive Order 13768, one meant to enhance public safety in the interior of the United States, 58,010 known migrants were deported in fourteen months, disappeared from the communities in which they embedded themselves in.⁹⁰ Pacific County is but one example for which to understand the gravity of Donald Trumps' anti-immigrant policies. In order for ICE to keep up with Trump's campaign promises to remove all eleven million migrants without proper documentation, the agency ramped up its use of artificial intelligence, using facial recognition and data collection from technological corporations to locate, stalk, and eventually apprehend migrants and their families.⁹¹ Migrants, unlike U.S. citizens, live within the U.S. unprotected by privacy laws regarding personal data usage.⁹² Organizations like ICE then purchase the available data from private companies, unbeknownst to the migrants using social media accounts or text messaging services, to locate migrants and subsequently detain and deport them without leaving a visible trace.

DINA lacked the technology in ICE's arsenal, limited by the era in which they existed, yet with the financial and militaristic support from the United States, they were able to infiltrate the lives of their political dissidents in other ways. Beginning in the 1960s, under Operation Condor, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia, and the United States teamed together to trade "data" in the form intelligence on communist organizing throughout the countries and those

⁸⁹ McKenzi Funk, "How ICE Picks Its Targets in Surveillance Age," *New York Times*, October 2, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/02/magazine/ice-surveillance-deportation.html>.

⁹⁰ Funk, "How ICE Picks Its Targets in Surveillance Age."

⁹¹ Funk, "How ICE Picks Its Targets in Surveillance Age."

⁹² Funk, "How ICE Picks Its Targets in Surveillance Age."

affiliated with it.⁹³ This trading of information built the foundation for DINA to thrive under Pinochet, allowing the secret police to embed themselves in communities they believed to be a threat to the regime's power. While ICE uses technological surveillance to infiltrate the lives of migrant families, DINA relied on spying and vigilante reporting from suspecting neighbors to collect information of political dissidents. Both ICE and DINA cultivated a sense of fear within the communities they operated so that even when the secret police could not disappear their targets themselves, their targets hid themselves away so far in the basement of the home they might never be seen again.

Carmen Rodríguez, in her novel *and a body to remember with*, articulates the experience of losing someone to a disappearance by DINA, one that might be related to the experience of losing a family member to deportation and displacement within migration detention centers. Rodríguez writes from the perspective of a woman who lost her lover to the political warfare of the Pinochet regime. The bereaved partner searches her apartment for a letter from her lover. She checks every drawer and every corner of her apartment only to give up at the end of her story. The woman speaks to her partner, though he is no longer there, promising that “[she] looked for the letter...[and] looked for [his] body, but there was nothing.”⁹⁴ At this moment, Rodríguez articulates what it is like to have known and to have loved someone disappeared into oblivion. For, to be disappeared is to be convinced that a person was never really there, an ultimate form of political violence and manipulation.

Control in an authoritarian regime comes from the constant identification, classification, and compartmentalization of constituents within the nation as explained above. Such tropes of

⁹³ J. Patrice McSherry, “Tracking the Origins of a State Terror Network, Operation Condor,” *Latin American Perspectives* Vol. 29, No.1, (January, 2002), 38.

⁹⁴ Carmen Rodríguez, *and a body to remember with*, (Arsenal Pulp Press, 2002), 43.

authoritarianism manifest in either the physical re-location of an individual based on their positionalities within a nation, like detention centers or concentration camps, or the social re-location of an individual within their communities. For the purpose of this thesis, the focus will remain on how the mother and her family are impacted by such political forces for she is but one lens to understand how fascism and authoritarianism disguise themselves as a democratic pursuit of national security and public safety. Both Pinochet and Trump utilized the figure of the mother in order to construct the home of the nation in their image, categorizing women into a biblical binary of motherhood so that they might decide whether she deserves to be inside the home (the nation) or exiled.

Mothers embodied either the Madonna figured, revered by the nation for their right-winged, religious fervor, or the whore who represented “the enemy of the ‘patria’.”⁹⁵ The results of fear-based policies meant that women and mothers were categorized within a biblical binary meaning mothers were either the Madonna, While the Madonna figure was supported by the nation as a figurehead of the family, she was also rendered a body “destined for the reproduction of society” just like the whore, who “in biblical terms, [was] destined to give birth to pain.”⁹⁶ The mother, whether poor, rich indigenous, European, or politically left or right, under an authoritarian governance was meant to be the “suffering, self-sacrificing mother” who was not an individual, but rather a machine reproducing a manufactured image of the nation. Thus, the mothers of a nation take on a “precariousness” as their lives are “in the hands of the other,” meaning the family as a political entity. For a nation to maintain power, founded on the fragility of fascism, they must administer life as they wish it to be, reinforced through control and fear.

⁹⁵ María Elena Acuña Moenne, “embodying memory: women and the legacy of the military government in Chile,” in *Feminist Review, suppl. Latin America: history, war, and independence*, trans. Matthew Webb, (London Iss. 79, 2005), 159.

⁹⁶ Elena Acuña Moenne, “embodying memory: women and the legacy of the military government in Chile,” 154.

The mother who is Madonna and the mother who is the whore lead different lives within an authoritarian regime. The Madonna is an upper-class, fair-skinned, and Christian mother. Her exterior is that of Western beauty, pumped to life with blue-blooded ideals of motherhood and the home. She is capitalism and imperialism brought to life with femininity. The Madonna, docile and malleable, is whatever the nation needs her to be to whomever needs to be taken care of. Therefore, the Madonna may leave the fortress of the home unlike the whore, who must remain invisible due to her sub-ontological difference. Madonna as a mother is a *transient* being for she inhabits a *trans-ontological* difference. Her embodiment of motherhood is comfortably situated and defined by the nation, giving her the option to exteriorizing her sense of being. Erin E. O'Connor in her book *Mothers Making Latin America: Gender, Households, and Politics Since 1825* discusses the mobility that wealthier women in Latin America purchase through their economic, and therefore social position within society. During the Pinochet era, the Madonna was the teacher for other mothers who were poor as well as the caretaker of their children. She volunteered and organized at mothering centers, making her the sculptor of motherhood which the *other* might be molded to. By training a new generation of mothers and children, the Madonna catalyzed the "project" of creating a nation "anew" with "new institutions, new territories, and new men and women."⁹⁷ A part of such project was the un-consensual or forced adoption of children discussed earlier in the chapter who were considered "at risk" with their birth mothers who embodied the trappings of the "whore" of the nation.

The whore, who is also a mother, is degraded by the nation into a sexual object so that she may be identified and stored as an enemy of the state. She exists in opposition to the nation, challenging the dictatorship religiously, politically, or economically; therefore, she is trapped in

⁹⁷ Elena Acuña Moenne, "embodying memory: women and the legacy of the military government in Chile," 151.

the sub-ontological spaces of the home. The whore is not meant to be seen nor heard, concealed by darkness and silenced by walls. If a mother did not fit the mold of the Madonna, like Sara Jineo, she was disposed of, rendered not only useless by the nation, but also a threat to its power. Her existence as a mother within the public sphere challenged Western motherhood. Sara Jineo was young, poor, single, and indigenous. She was not a part of the traditional family, but rather an outlier who was an “enemy within” the nation.⁹⁸ Therefore, women like Sara Jineo were made invisible to themselves through trauma or invisible to the nation by being disposed of.

The state sanctioned disposal of mothers who were no longer useful to the interests of the nation, whose bodies were extracted from, are representative of the capitalistic ideals of Western imperialism. Once an object, like the whore, can no longer produce or service the interests of the system for which she belongs to, she is disappeared. Often, in the case of Chile during the Pinochet regime, mothers were disappeared into apartments and homes within neighborhoods, sentenced to torture and sexual violence for her “transgressive” behavior.⁹⁹ Organizations like DINA sent its soldiers to “lugares que son abandonados, deshabitados, descuidados, transformados, reconstruidos, retro-convertidos, normalizados, negados, desconocidos, [y] olivados,” yet they were all within ear shot of a neighbor, embedded in the fabric of a community. Both invisible and visible, these detention and torture centers were designed to destroy the subversive mother, and therefore, the subversive home so that both might be forgotten, almost like they never existed at all.¹⁰⁰

In Pinochet’s Chile, women tortured and killed in secret facilities were often disappeared not back into the earth, but rather out of airplanes and into the ocean, never to be seen again. This

⁹⁸ Elena Acuña Moenne, “embodying memory: women and the legacy of the military government in Chile,” 151.

⁹⁹ José Santos Herceg, “Los centros de detención y/o tortura en Chile,” *Revista Izquierdas*, November 26, 2015, <https://journals.openedition.org/izquierdas/764?lang=en>.

¹⁰⁰ José Santos Herceg, “Los centros de detención y/o tortura en Chile,” *Revista Izquierdas*, November 26, 2015, <https://journals.openedition.org/izquierdas/764?lang=en>.

final act of disposing of bodies completed the cycle of violence so that these mothers would never be naturalized into the earth or into the nation. Their bodies would never go back into the soil for which they came from, stripping them of their right to be used as fertilizer for the land of their people, an ultimate act of political, cultural, and social exile.

In the United States, mothers and their children are not disposed of into the ocean nor brought to secret facilities in neighborhoods but brought to immigration detention facilities located in rural and remote locations across the country. Immigration detention centers in the United States are no secret to the public preview. Any inclined citizen may visit a place like McAllen, Texas to look through the fenced exterior of the detention centers' prison-like buildings. Yet, the migrants inside are invisible. They are brought into the nation without rights to be processed and deemed worthy of naturalization, to be categorized as a good foreigner who might enhance the US' ecosystem or disrupt it. Donald Trump uses the migrant's status of arriving at the border without papers as a way to sanction the treatment and imprisonment of such peoples for extended periods of time. USA Today reported in 2019 Donald Trump saying that "they [referring to migrants] came in illegally, and we're bringing them out legally."¹⁰¹ Such rhetoric legitimizes and normalizes the conditions that the United States subjects migrants to in these facilities, invisibilizing the violence that transpires every day like forcible family separation, sexual violence, forced hysterectomies, starvation, and sleep deprivation, to name a few. However, such crimes against humanity cannot be prosecuted or brought to justice within legal system of the United States' democracy as migrants are not protected under citizenship for they are no longer part of any nation.

¹⁰¹ Michael Collins and David Jackson, "Trump says detention facilities 'beautifully run' after report describes dangerous conditions," *USA Today*, July 5, 2019, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2019/07/05/immigration-trump-defends-beautifully-run-detention-facilities/1660455001/>.

CONCLUSION

“Under the absolute sway of one man the body was attacked in order to subdue the soul; but the soul escaped the blows which were directed against it and rose proudly superior. Such is not the course adopted by tyranny in democratic republics; there the body is left free, and the soul is enslaved. The master no longer says: “You shall think as I do or you shall die”; but he says: You are free to think differently from me and to retain your life, your property, and all that you possess; but you are henceforth a stranger among your people. You may retain your civil rights, but they will be useless to you, for you will never be chosen by your fellow citizens if you solicit their votes; and they will affect to scorn you if you ask for their esteem. You will remain among men, but you will be deprived of the rights of mankind. Your fellow creatures will shun you like an impure being; and even those who believe in your innocence will abandon you, lest they should be shunned in their turn. Go in peace! I have given you your life, but it is an existence worse than death.”

-Alexis de Toqueville, *Democracy in America*

To come into *being* in a democracy is like accepting a loan that you cannot afford for a house beyond your means from a bank that knows you will default on your payments. Democracy in America is like the housing crisis of 2008. The possibility of homeownership is and was a promise, a manifestation of grandeur, a physical representation of what *could be* in a democracy founded on an idea of an omnipotent economic model. The theory of *being* in a democracy is that of a trans-ontological difference, a sense that to fully inhabit oneself as a *being*, one must look to the future and hope for a sense of self that will come in due time but has not arrived at. The family pays a price for this type of aspirational living, sinking further into debt so that the family may settle themselves on property. Only on private land, may a family tell its members to “go in peace!”

for they are ensured a space in the nation, where they may be legitimized as a political and social beings.¹⁰² The family may experience bodily comfortable in their newfound property, though their souls are indebted forever to the banks, shackled so that they may never truly be in peace. The notion of freedom through property and ownership is fleeting. The democratic republic which exclaims “I have given you your life,” by granting the family a pathway to homeownership is the same republic which also condemns one to “an existence worse than death” if the family is unable to pay their debt to the nation by foreclosing on the property, rendering a family homeless and economically immobile.

To fully access citizenship in a democracy is to align oneself with the “will of God” and the will of capitalism. Both entities stand in equal power, extending their invisible hands to the chosen ones.¹⁰³ The belief that religious and economic forces give success to those deserving of it, to those who “pull themselves up by their bootstraps,” is a uniquely “democratic tendency” which leads man to “circumscribe the rights of private persons” and relentlessly “defend what little remains of them.”¹⁰⁴ Thus, they built their legacy, inching closer and closer to citizenship in America at its fullest by building a home that never stops growing. To continue building their home, they do not use their own two hands but rather solicit help from those below them, those who are farther from the fullest expression of rights and citizenship. They call to the basement from the ground floor, waiting for whoever hears to travel up the ladder, moving as fast as possible in hopes that economic opportunity might transform a sub-ontological difference into a trans-ontological one.

¹⁰² Hannah Ardent, *Human Condition*, pg. 107.

¹⁰³ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, eds. Henry Reeve and John C Spencer, (Penguin Publishing Group, 2003), 7.

¹⁰⁴ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, eds. Henry Reeve and John C Spencer, (Penguin Publishing Group, 2003).

Augusto Pinochet overtly weaponized his political sovereignty in Chile during the military coup of 1973, embodying what Alexis de Toqueville outlines as the ethos of nationalized tyranny—“you shall think as I do or you shall die.”¹⁰⁵ During his regime, Pinochet was the absolute authoritarian of the nation, sentencing anyone who opposed him in social or political thought to be tortured, killed, or a fate even worse—disappeared. Pinochet’s politically right, fascist regime came into power three years after the socialist president, Allende was democratically elected to office. As Chile was in the midst of Marxist reform, Pinochet and the United States plotted in the background. Only with the military training and financial support provided by the United States was Pinochet able to successfully orchestrate the military coup of 1973. Yet, the United States and CIA’s entanglement with the Chilean dictator went unrecognized for decades until the government’s documents were declassified with the Freedom of Information Act. The CIA released documents that record Richard Nixon asking the intelligence agency to “make the economy scream” in Chile and to “prevent Allende from coming to power” for he represented a socialist government, an economic model that undermines all religious and political authority within the United States. If Chile fell to what the United States perceived as a Russian invasion of communism, if a promising economic hub of Latin America became another “victim” of the red scare, then the invisible hand of liberal capitalism would be severed at the wrist, too weak to uphold the power structures of neo-liberalism.¹⁰⁶ Strategy papers from the National Security Council outline efforts by the United States to “destabilize Chile economically, and isolate Allende’s government diplomatically,” proving, unequivocally, that the United States single-handedly

¹⁰⁵ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, eds. Henry Reeve and John C Spencer, (Penguin Publishing Group, 2003).

¹⁰⁶ Peter Kornblud, “Chile and the United States: Declassifies Documents Relating to the Military Coup, September 11, 1973,” (National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 8), <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB8/nsaebb8i.htm>.

brought a dictator into power.¹⁰⁷ Thus, for the sake of capitalism and the longevity of the economic model for which the United States came into *being*, authoritarianism and oppression in its most obvious form, separated by land and water from the homeland, was not only condoned but ushered into action.

The United States believes it their responsibility, by divine right, to protect not only their “democratic republic,” but others around the world For, *liberty and justice for all* not only pertains to those confined by the walled and militarized borders of the United States, but to the citizens of the world. Nevertheless, a campaign for democracy facilitated through neo-liberal political fervor resides on the ground level in the home of the nation. Like a family crest or family portrait that might hang proudly above the fireplace, at the bosom and heart of the home, democracy symbolizes the ancestral legacy of the family or what the original family hoped to represent themselves as. The coat of amour for which the United States bears is that of its Constitution, Bill of Rights, and judicial system, all ideas of what freedom could be, but not what it is. For, there has never been liberty and justice for all, and there will never be liberty and justice *for all*.

The border space between Mexico and the United States then becomes the physical battleground where authoritarianism, fascism, democracy, and capitalism confront one another.¹⁰⁸ The border reveals where American democracy has failed abroad, and as a result how American democracy fails domestically in the *here* and *now*. On June 2nd, 2019, Donald Trump tweeted, “Mexico is an ‘abuser’ of the United States, taking but never giving...” and “it has been this way for decades.”¹⁰⁹ Trump’s tweet reinforced the idea that Mexico, a country whose name in the

¹⁰⁷ Kornblud, “Chile and the United States: Declassifies Documents Relating to the Military Coup, September 11, 1973.”

¹⁰⁸ I include capitalism in the list of political structures for it functions similarly in power to another governmental regimes.

¹⁰⁹ Anthony Rivas, “Trumps Language about Mexican immigrants under scrutiny in wake of El Paso Shooting,” *ABC News*, August 4, 2019, <https://abcnews.go.com/US/trumps-language-mexican-immigrants-scrutiny-wake-el-paso/story?id=64768566>.

United States signifies all of Latin America, is deliberately waging war against the United States through the migrant and border crisis. The blame for the number of migrants, particularly migrant women and children, became the fault of the Mexican government and others like it for creating a state which Donald Trump would describe as a land of “drug dealers, criminals, and rapists.” Trump’s rhetoric is deliberate, constructing a coalition that unequivocally supports stricter immigration policy and a fortification of the borderlands to protect the United States from the “enemy” foreigner. “Build the Wall,” a rallying cry among Donald Trump’s most zealous fans, was a political play at hiding the cracks in America’s façade of democracy, using othered nations as a scapegoat for the U.S.’ own failure at maintaining a democratic state.

In order for the United States to maintain itself in the global purview as a democratic nation successfully operating within the free-market model of capitalism, they must untangle themselves from the ghosts of their colonial, imperial, and neo-liberal past which loom at the border. The ghosts knock on the front door of the nation, daring to traverse the gated front lawn onto the private property, wondering if in the United States they might find the economic opportunities their own countries were once promised during the age of neo-liberal imperialism, but were never seen to fruition. The ghosts represent a failure to implant American democracy abroad, which is not a democracy at all, but rather an economic model built around extraction and exploitation, where one “may retain [their] civil rights, but they will be useless to [them].” The ghosts in this metaphorical analysis are not the migrants themselves, but the embodied trauma of living in a coloniality of being, passed on inter-generationally. Furthermore, the ghost believes if they reach their invisible hand across the border space between the global South and North, they might naturalize themselves into a nation where “bootstrap” upward mobility is believed possible.

The Trump administration's war on "illegal" migration centered migrant mothers and their children as the biggest threat to the ever-enduring "border crisis." Migrant mothers who arrive at the border space with or without their children represent a new wave of migration in which the woman leaves the realm of domesticity in her home country seeking to better the economic situation of her family in another. To provide her family with a sense of bodily comfort by way of financial support, the migrant mother abandons her sense of self, anchored in her home country, where she comes into being having her "child on one side, and [her] parents on the other."¹¹⁰ In her home, she represents motherhood through her connection to the people who surround her in her community and her family, particularly her mother.¹¹¹ When the migrant mother leaves her homestead to begin a new life in a new place, she also leaves the "intergenerational interaction" of mothering.¹¹² Being a mother in Latin America is largely based on how she herself was mothered.¹¹³ When she migrates to the United States, the mother takes her perception of the home "across contexts, producing a cultural dislocation with no history that is recognized as "natural."¹¹⁴ To build one's sense of home around a moving entity, unfettered by traditional notions of property is to break away from the interests of the United States government, which maintain the structure of the nation through the traditional structure of the home. Migrant mothers are constantly asked to negotiate change, re-defining cultural paradigms that determine how motherhood is embodied.¹¹⁵ They do not construct the home as *dreamers* do, building each floor vertically, but instead circumvent the home, building spaces for mothering along a journey for which they take one step forward, rather than upward.

¹¹⁰ Hernández-Albújar, "Narratives of Identity and Motherhood Among Latin American Migrant Women" 126.

¹¹¹ Hernández-Albújar, "Narratives of Identity and Motherhood Among Latin American Migrant Women" 126.

¹¹² Hernández-Albújar, "Narratives of Identity and Motherhood Among Latin American Migrant Women" 111.

¹¹³ Hernández-Albújar, "Narratives of Identity and Motherhood Among Latin American Migrant Women" 112.

¹¹⁴ Hernández-Albújar, "Narratives of Identity and Motherhood Among Latin American Migrant Women" 131.

¹¹⁵ Hernández-Albújar, "Narratives of Identity and Motherhood Among Latin American Migrant Women" IV.

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