

# The Family, Huatabampo, 2003

**I**t was a bad year. Everyone was comparing  
my old, childhood hero to a new  
Kobie. Our blood we believed  
flowed red, blue and—wow—white  
and everywhere the symbol of empire  
was on the windows of people who loved

their children. I wake in México having loved  
in my sleep whom I cannot remember. A new  
sunshine in opaque glass. In the living room, an empire  
of small rod-iron angels; the mothers compare  
each baby-breath halo, the clothing they make for white  
harmless solders. For a son's confirmation. For *Dios* believed

in the duty of the hands. Be. Lived.

Children scurrying in the kitchen; the parents' hands rest on the love  
shaped thighs; the grandparents presiding; and the elder, white  
and tired, tottering between chair and bathroom, comparing  
each of his steps. The space stained with TV green from the new  
flashing lights and scatter. My people are flexing their empire.

The kids ask me if they'll bomb *my house*; empir-  
ically it makes sense, but it's impossible. I believe  
in words I have heard and forget. A new  
aroma calms this world: Carne Asada. I'll love  
the dances, they say, pointing to a room and I compare  
the paint peeling at the entrance, bright green versus white.

Next day the music is pounding, the family unchanged. Figures in white  
sweats dance. A room through the window: wooden floored, mirrored, an empire  
of shifts, bends, turns, and leglifts. Each girl comparing  
the others' rhythm. Paloma, who makes angels, believes  
in the endurance of thighs. She yells for pace. "Troops, make love  
in the air!" Her father tells me to go see them, a new

beginning in the spandex of the newly  
twenty. This dance could makes someone, could white-  
wash any news, could paint a love  
for crumbling buildings. Later, an empire  
of eyelashes surrounds us, reaching; I believe  
I can't talk, Spanish broken when nervous. I compare

their walk with a more desperate fleeing: odd new empire  
white in my mind, superimposed, glistening. I do not want to believe.  
Through the windows of the town, love peeks out and compares.

**Aaron Zaritzky**

### **Crítica**

Zaritzky masterfully uses a traditional sestina form to construct various images re-using the same language to narrate and create contrasting images both of the United States and Northern Mexico. In many occasions, the expression reminds us of baroque poetry with intense use of hyperbole, hyperbaton and enjambment.

The two key points to understand this narration are given in the title- the place and time. The year 2003 indicates a period where US troops are being mobilized into the Middle East and yet our poetic subject, realizing that social condition at home, finds himself in a completely different juxtaposed space- the small Mexican town. The poem will then narrated from the perspective of US foreigners and their visionary, exotic and postmodern encounters in this small town of Huatabampo, Sonora.

Zaritzky will rely on six key words which will convey both images and emotions: compare, new, believe, white, empire and love. These will be reconfigured into noun, verb, adjective and adverbial counterparts to demonstrate the delight with language that has been attributed the production of postmodernism. This contemporary style is also evident in the clashing imagery of the provincial elements describing the lifestyle in Huatabampo and the co-existence of television, white spandex, pounding music and aerobics which indicate the cultural influence from the "empire" (read United States).

Although some critics have considered the sestina a mere poetic exercise, Zaritzky's poem has challenged that conception by conveying images of the Other and contextualizing it to create a social discourse where two worlds, so near, co-exist and yet are so different.

**Liz Consuelo Rangel**