

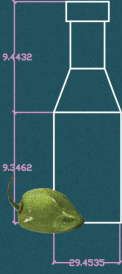
COFFEE FRIDAYS

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Today is November 7th, I am at my great-grandparents' ranch finishing moving out some last few things in here in order to sell off the property. It's interesting how people imbue some spaces and even stuff beyond the grave with all their being. The house still smells of tobacco and coffee, perhaps the wood retains the smell, as the place is quite humid.

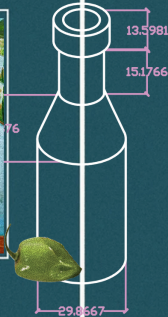
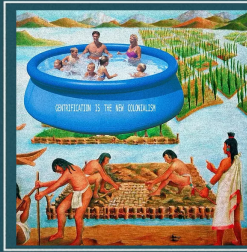
Anyway, Roberto and Irene passed away a few years ago but it's the first time that I've returned to this place, it is dark and cold, but I don't feel fear, nostalgia invades first. They were very eccentric and passionate people; I like to think of them as repressed artists. They both had a free and innovative spirit. I always wanted to know more about my great-grandparents because they were a total mystery to me, an enigma. I could never know enough, it intrigued me to see Roberto always reading things that appeared unintelligible to me; with an analytical expression on his face that made being able to understand all those fanciful old book titles that I am now moving out inside these boxes even more interesting to me. Irene on her part seemed very serious, I remember always seeing her with a kerchief on her head and a very long skirt, she always talked about our ancestors and the importance of our roots.

Some time ago my father was told that in about five years' time the construction of a new shopping center and a golf course would be started right where my grandparents' ranch is located. The land will be used and much of the vegetation and the properties that are here will be destroyed. Nobody cares about the small families that have lived here for decades, their ranches and their animals.



Near this area there is a small town in the state of Hidalgo, and these families live off what they can sell to this town. I wonder what will happen to their properties and what the government will do. My father decided to sell off our land, we no longer have anything here. I think that until today I was able to understand what brought my great-grandparents to Mexico. My great-grandparents were very ceremonial people. Every Friday night Irene would light dim, warm candles, open all the windows, cook some very delicious artichokes, and make the best Turkish coffee I have ever tasted. We sat at the small wooden table in the kitchen and Roberto would put on his favorite album by Manuel Molina, a Romani-Spanish bohemian flamenco singer. I think I was about 15 or 16 years old, so I could already understand most of what they were talking about. I told them to tell me their story, the reason why they were in here and not their country.

They both knew each other from a very young age because they lived in the same town, a place on the outskirts of Seville in Andalusia, Spain. Irene could not tell me much about her ancestors due to the lack of information and the passing of the decades, but she says that her family migrated from Algeria to the south of Spain and lived there for generations and generations. Roberto always considered himself a Spaniard. Even then they both recognized themselves as Moors, with light brown skin, unibrows, a lot of body hair, and mesmerizing eyes.

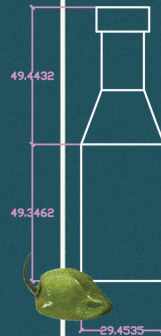
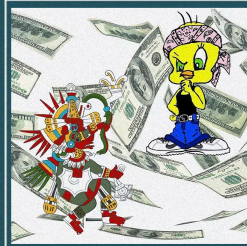


They told me that the situation was never easy for their community, there was rejection by the Spanish towards both the Moors and Romani people, they were stigmatized and despite having been in Spain for multiple generations, they were treated as foreign scum just for being Romani or Moor.

They were never wealthy people; Roberto's father was a carpenter and my great-grandfather along with his siblings and their parents lived in a workshop that served as both home and workplace. On Irene's side there wasn't that much money either, but she lived a little more comfortably. Her parents died when she was very young, and her parents' siblings adopted my great-grandmother and all her siblings between themselves.

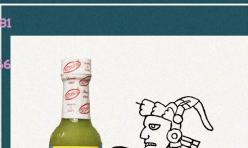
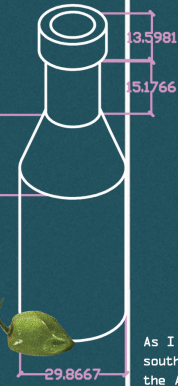
My great-grandparents married young and at the time they had their first child, my great-uncle Jose Moises, something that Irene stressed was happening is that the people from the north of Spain did not like the people from the south that well.

As I wrote earlier, Moor and Romani people were relegated to the southern areas, right where you'll see most of the influence of the Arabic world in Spain. Roberto and Irene were able to buy a house on the outskirts of Córdoba, but from there things would get even more complicated, since the presence of "pure Spaniards", that is, white and wealthy people, increased in this city. Roberto said that with the arrival of these people, life in that poor town became much more expensive and difficult for the people who already lived there, food, clothing, property, etc. Little by little all those Moors and Romanies in the area had to move further south to be able to even afford food. This displacement of people from the north to the south in poor cities only affected the people who already lived there, since people with greater wealth began to build their properties in those lands. There was never room for healthy coexistence since the wealthy were in charge of discriminating, insulting, and excluding the Moors and Romanies in the area. Gentrification, that is the specific word for this social phenomenon.



It may be that my great-grandparents had no idea this word existed, maybe they didn't know what they were going through, but that prompted them to move to Mexico in order to find better life opportunities.

I wonder what they would think now if they knew the same thing is going to happen to their ranch. I believe that urban development is not "development" if you have to exclude and relegate a certain group of people to continue satisfying the whims and desires of another group of people with a clear problem of consumerism and abused power. But this has always happened in this country, with the Spanish conquest towards the native American people as a prime example, and in many more places, I guess. It is a silent crime, because sadly nobody takes notice, because nobody knows that it has a name. Not even those affected know what they are going through or maybe they do, but that does not matter because they





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are against a capitalist monster, they are against a society without any empathy. There is nothing left of their lands or their roots, sometimes I think about where they will end up, or whether we will end up extinguishing them for good.

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OTHER ARTISTS:

Ojos Flotando

Martha Priego

La Garrapata

El Paisa

Arte y cotidianidad

Hija del mariachi

David Cruz

E.V.

E.V.

E.V.