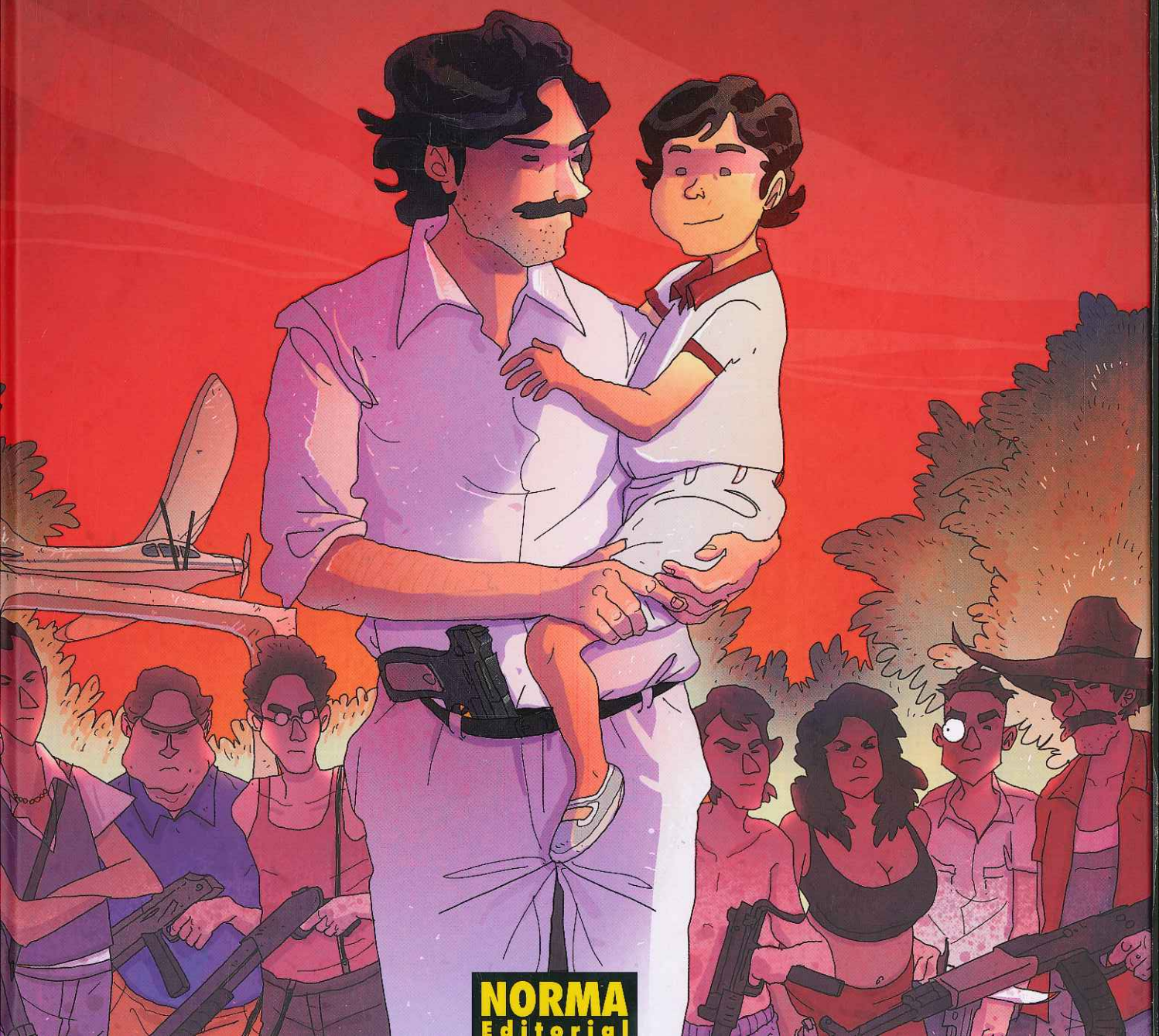
JUAN PABLO ESCOBAR

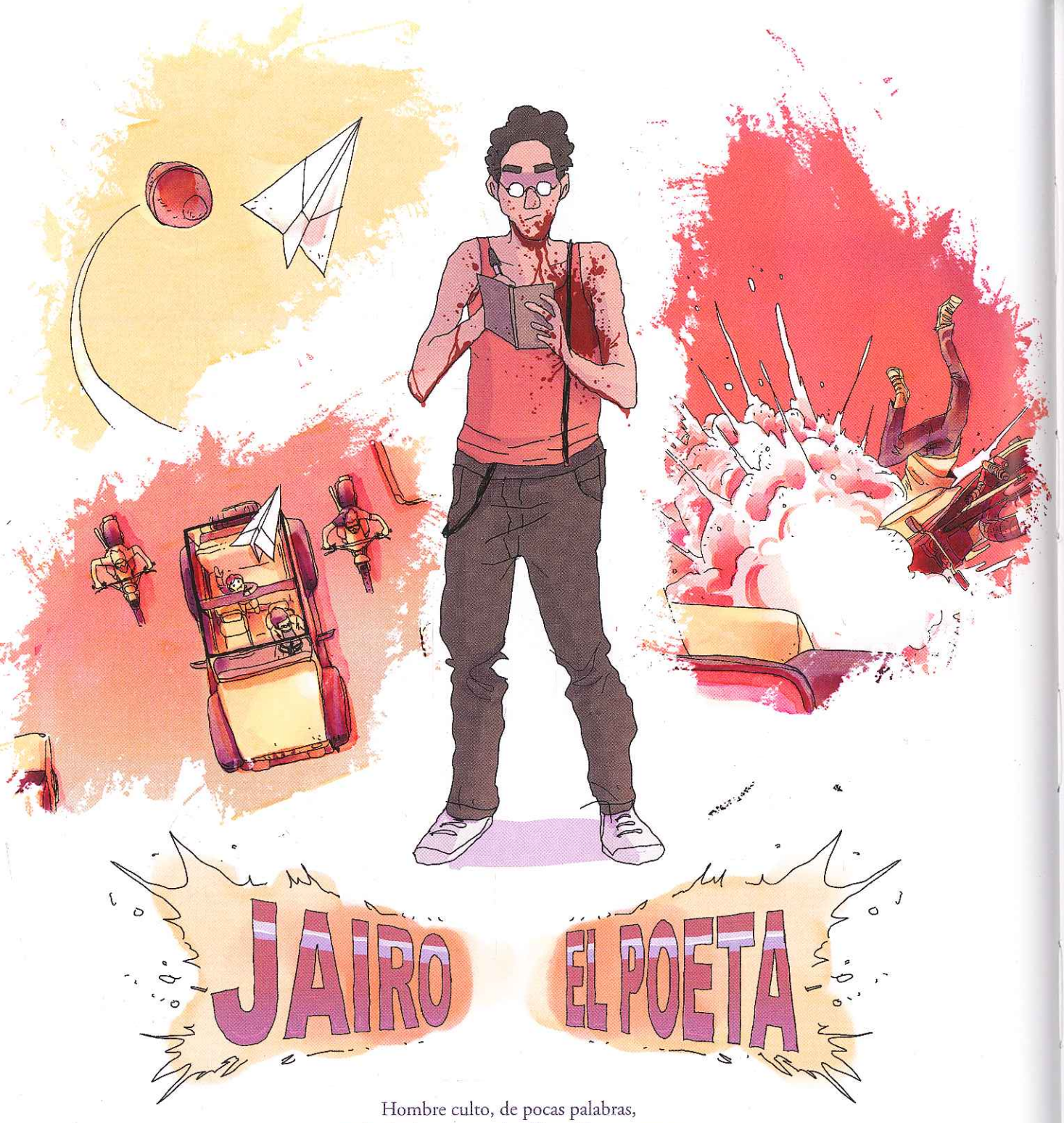
PABLO MARTÍN FARINA • ALBERTO MADRIGAL

ESCOBAR

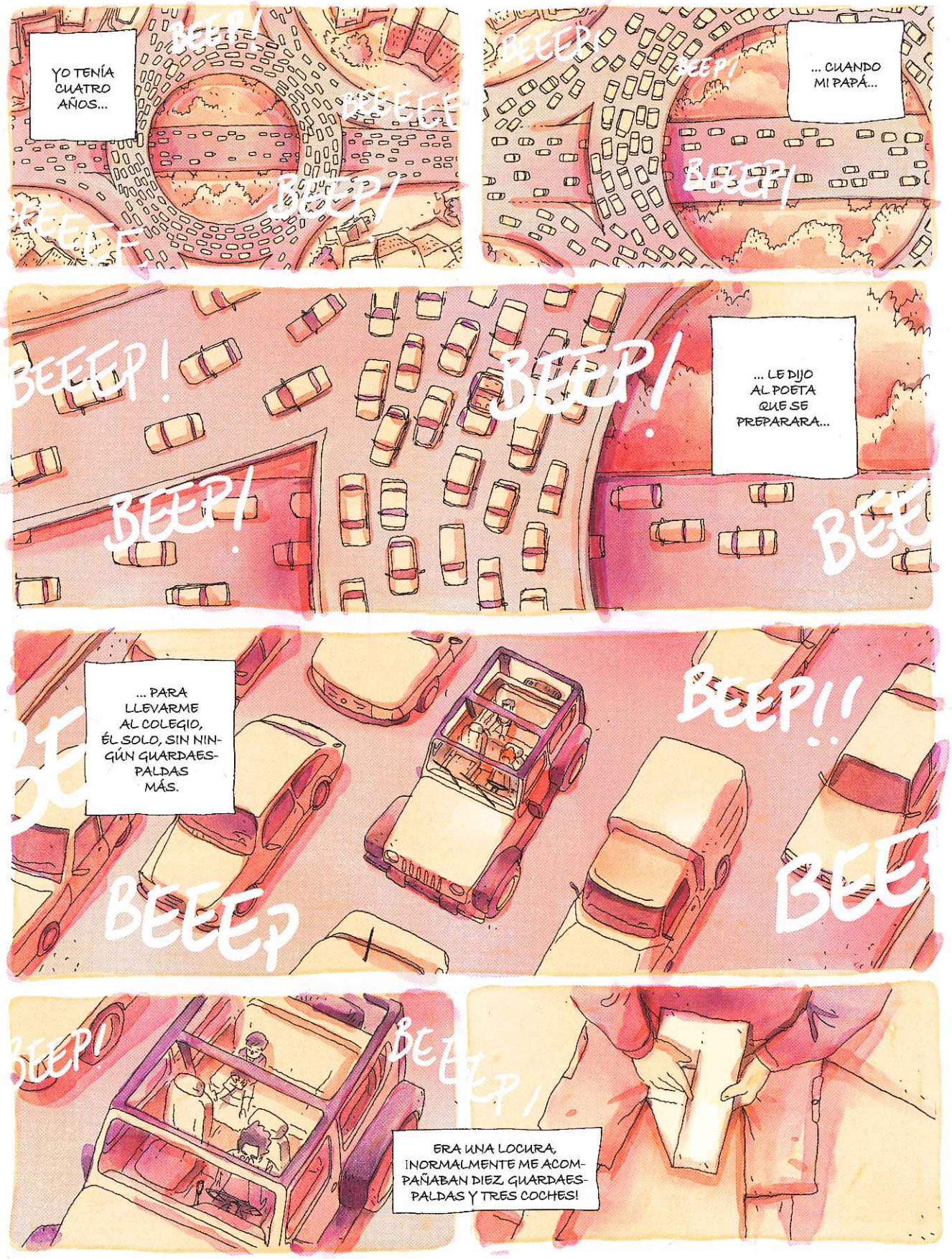
UNA EDUCACIÓN CRIMINAL



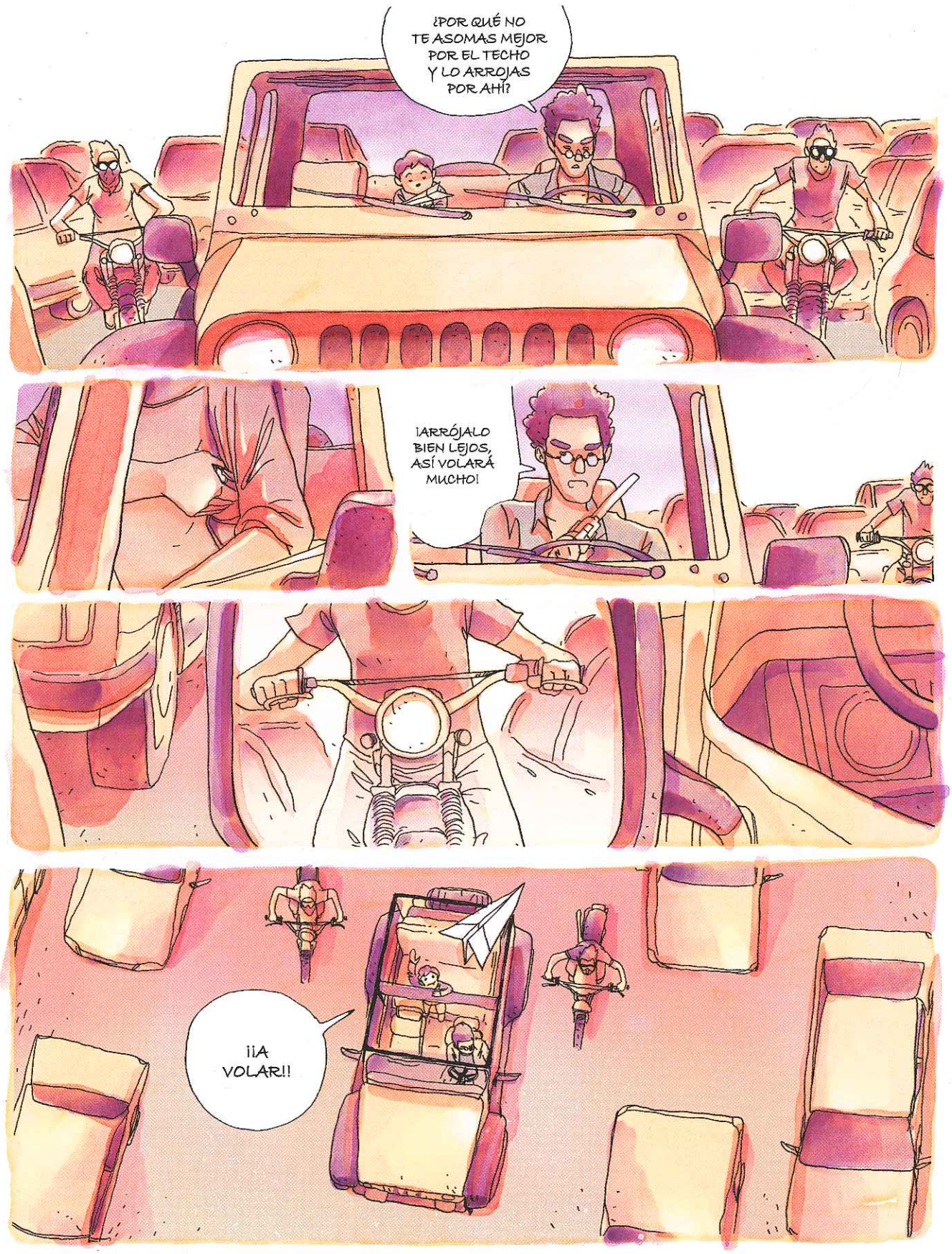
NORMA Editorial

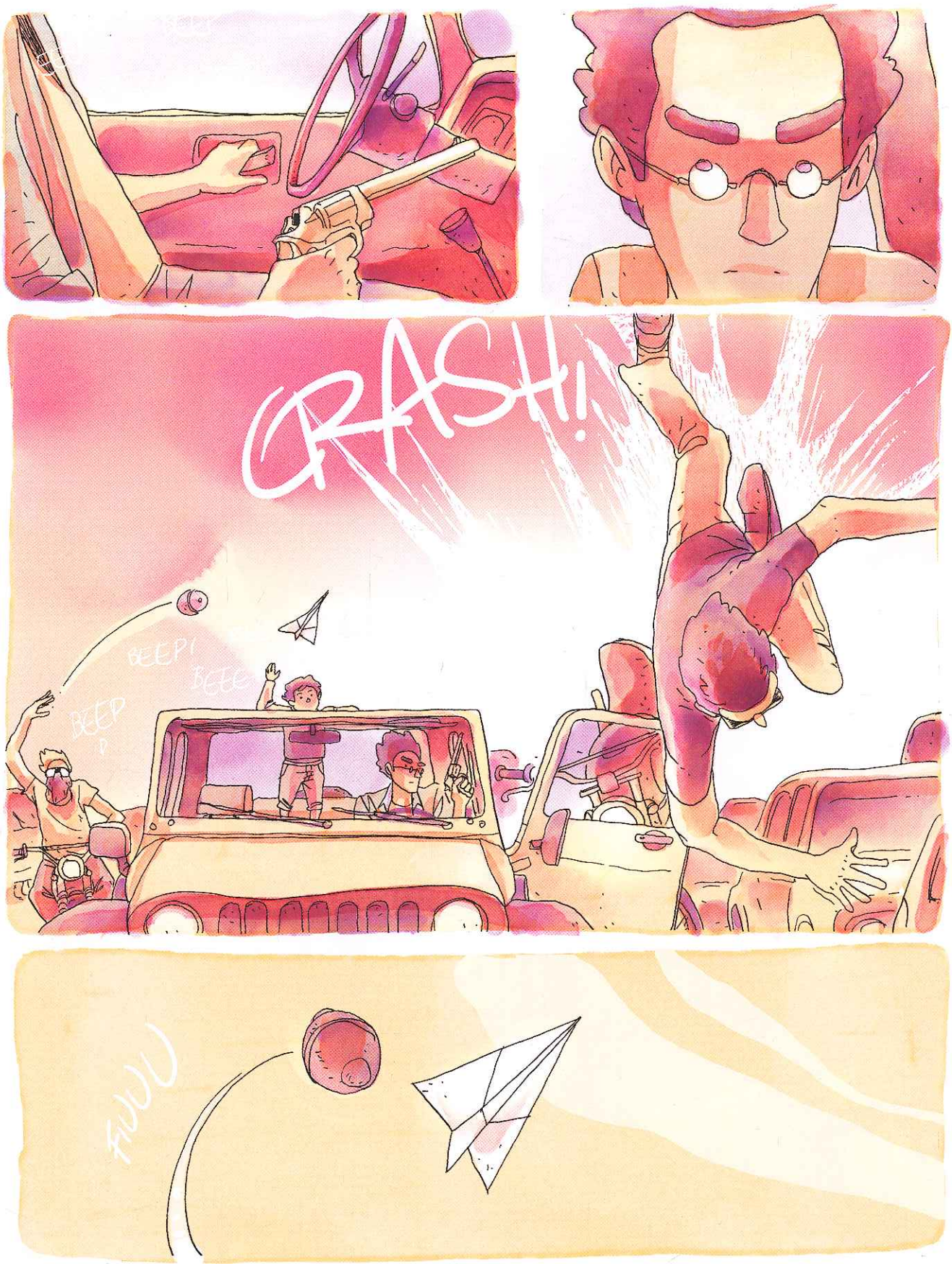


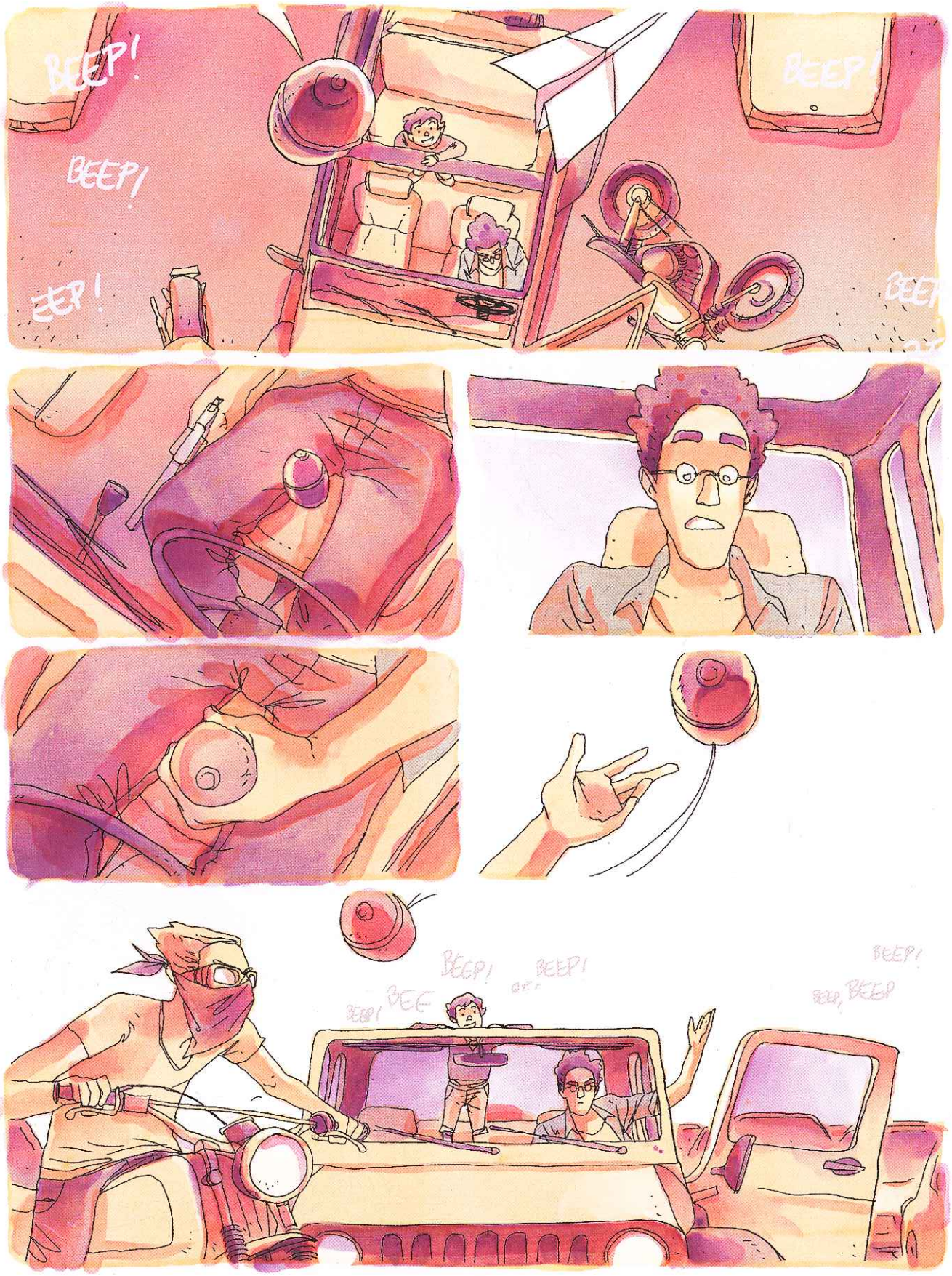
Hombre culto, de pocas palabras, perfeccionista y muy detallista. El poeta no es un bandido que mate por dinero, él se inventa razones más poéticas para llevar a cabo el asesinato. Es el perfecto asesino, sagaz e inteligente, y le gustaba utilizar métodos no violentos. "¿Te gusta la poesía?", pregunta siempre antes de asesinar a sus víctimas.

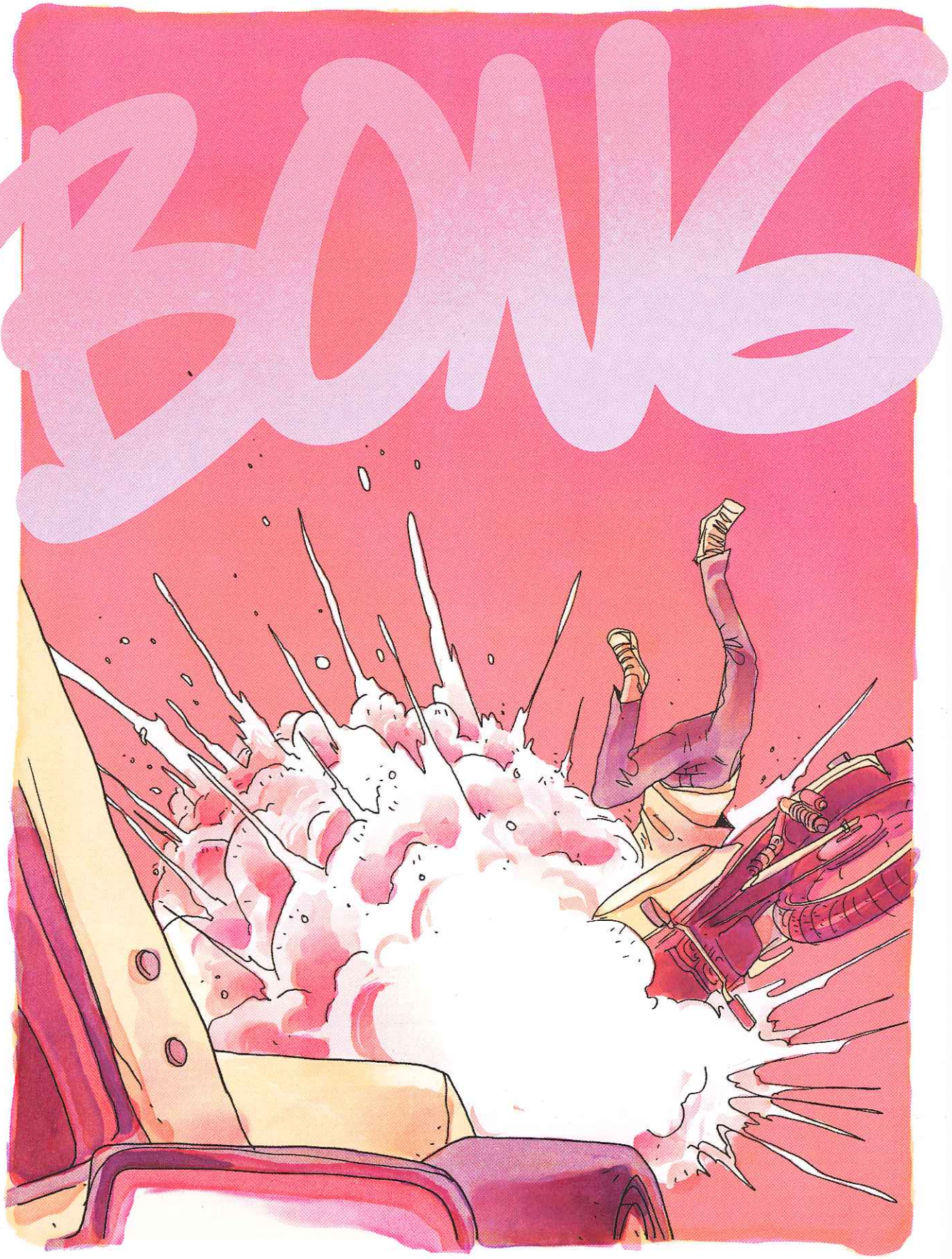

YO TENÍA CUATRO AÑOS...
BEEP!
BEEEEP!
BEEEEP!
BEEEEP!
... CUANDO MI PAPÁ...
BEEEP!
BEEP!
BEEEEP!
BEEEEP!
... LE DIJO AL POETA QUE SE PREPARARA...
BEEEEP!
BEEP!
BEEP!
... PARA LLEVARME AL COLEGIO, ÉL SOLO, SIN NINGÚN GUARDAESPALDAS MÁS.
BEEEP
BEEP!!
BEEP!
BEEP!
ERA UNA LOCURA, ¡NORMALMENTE ME ACOMPAÑABAN DIEZ GUARDAESPALDAS Y TRES COCHES!

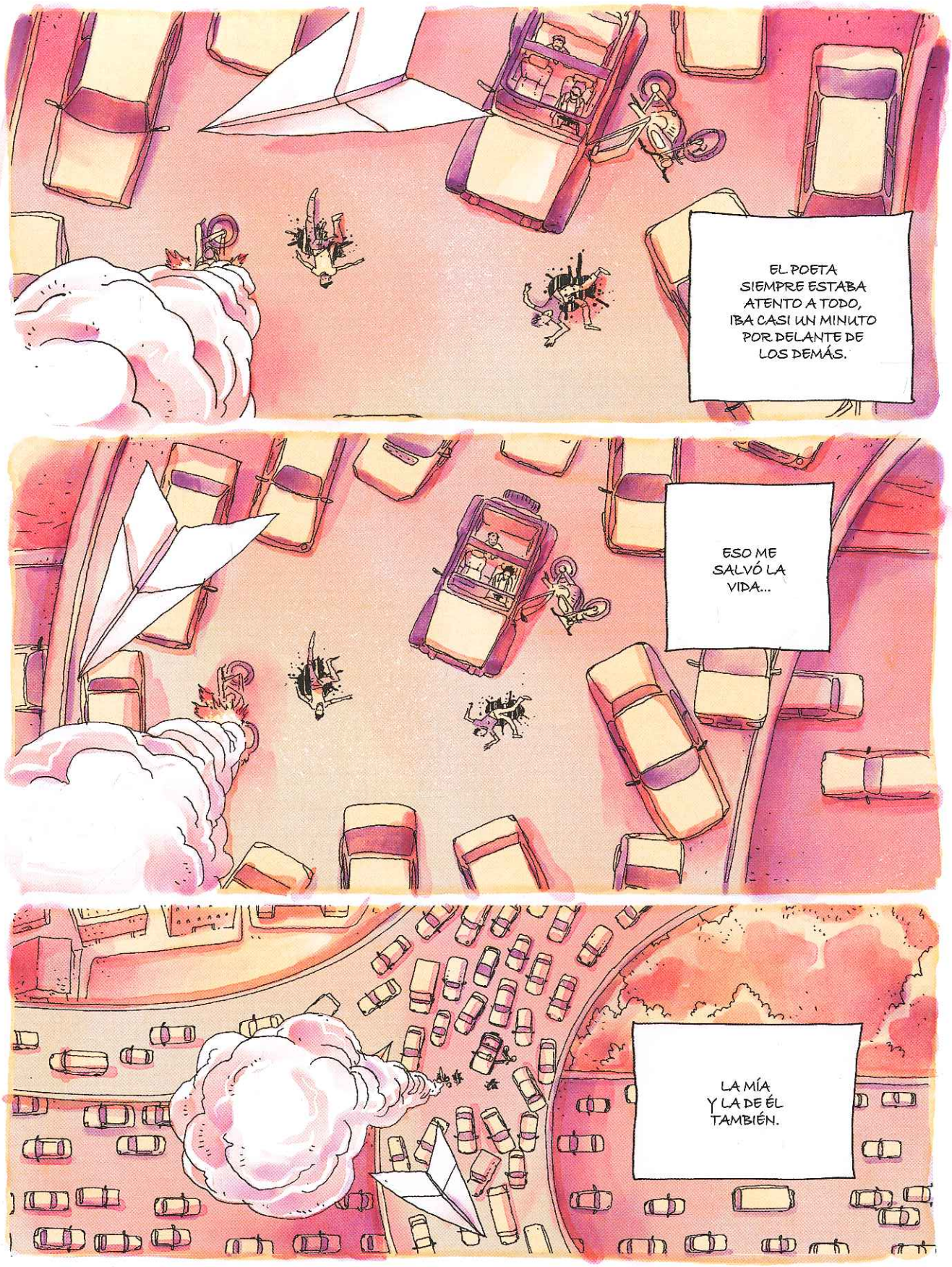

¿ESE AVIÓN TUYO VOLARÁ MUCHO, AMIGO JUANCHI?
¡CON ESTE ATASCO, JUSTO LO QUE NECESITARÍAMOS ES UN PUTO AVIÓN!
MÍRALO, ¿TE GUSTA?
BEEP
VOY A HACERLO VOLAR POR LA VENTANILLA.
¡NO, JUANCHI, NO ABRAS LA VENTANA!

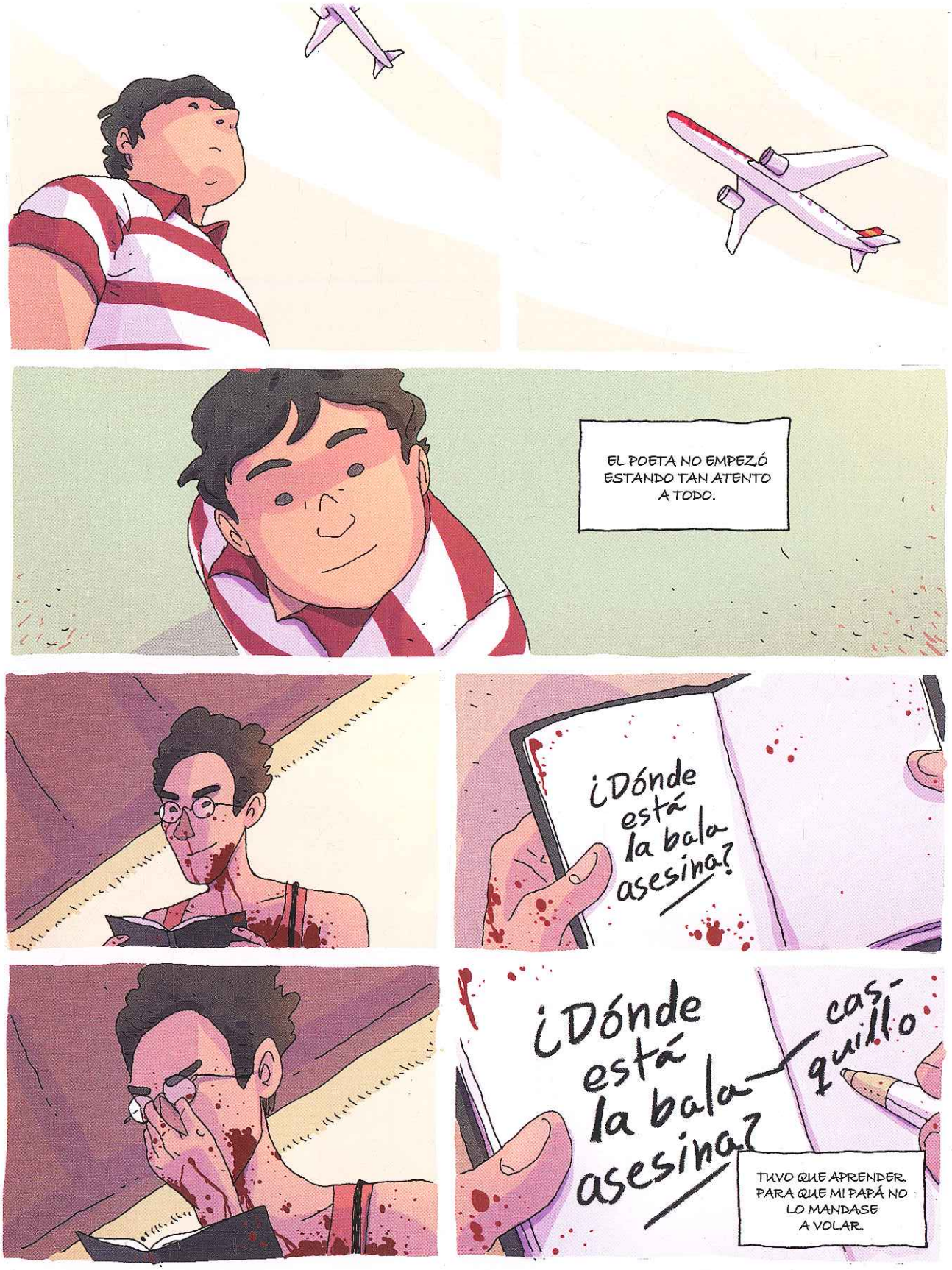

¿POR QUÉ NO TE ASOMAS MEJOR POR EL TECHO Y LO ARROJAS POR AHÍ?
¡ARRÓJALO BIEN LEJOS, ASÍ VOLARÁ MUCHO!
¡¡A VOLAR!!


CRASH!
BEEP!
BEEP
FUUU

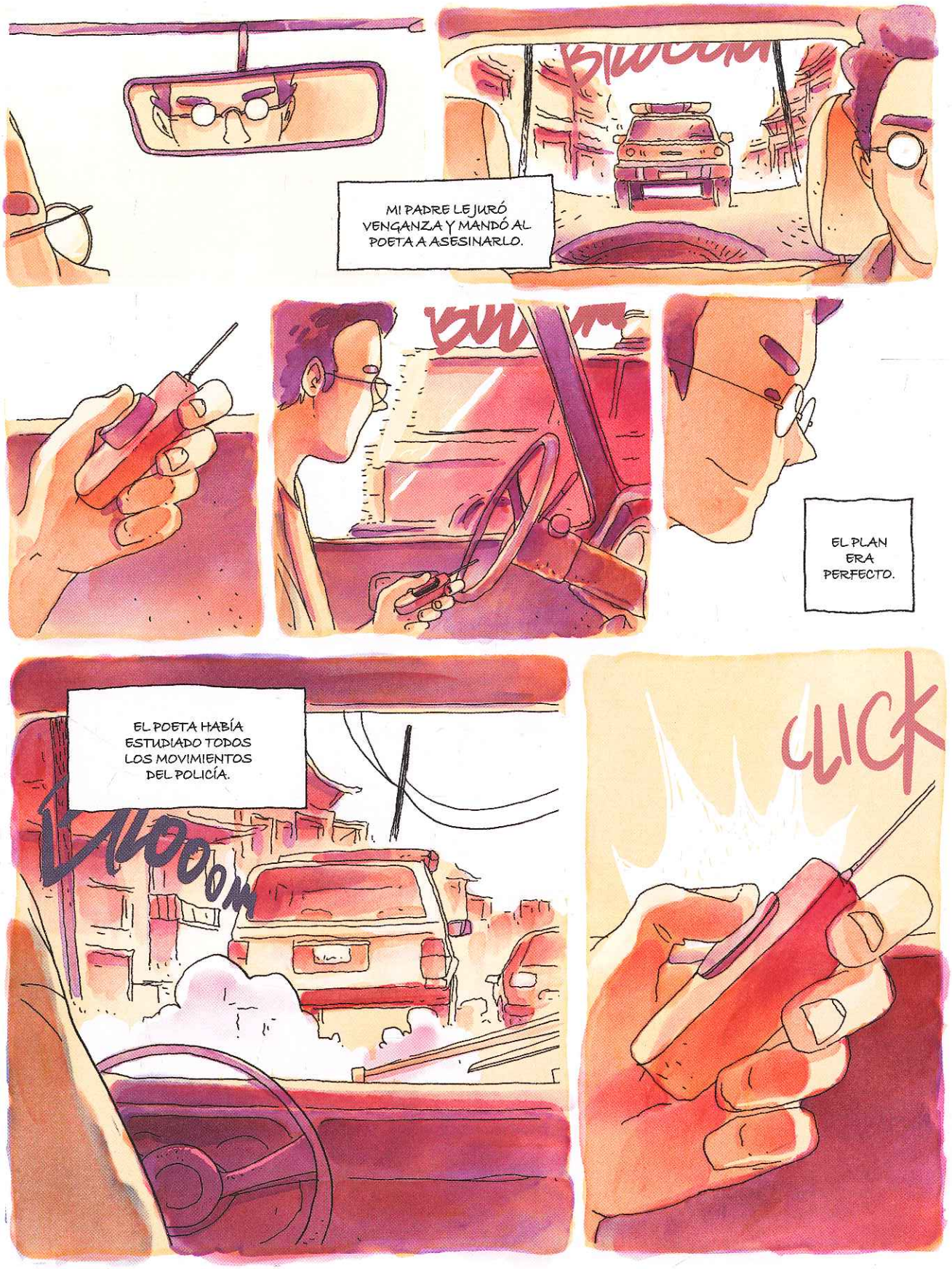

BEEP!
BEEP!
BEEP!
BEEP!
BEEP!
BEEP!
BEEP!
BEEP!
BEEP, BEEP

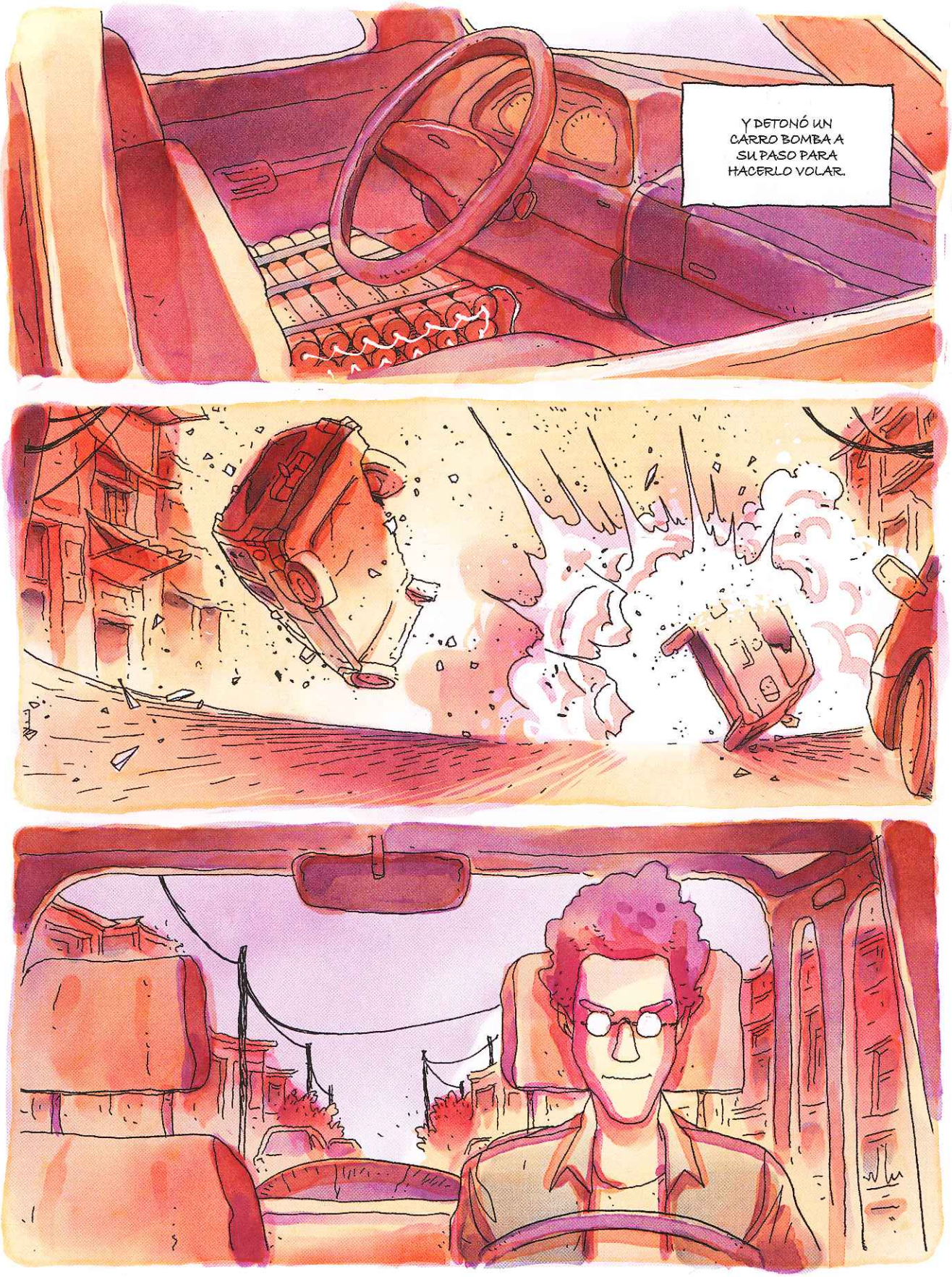

BOUM

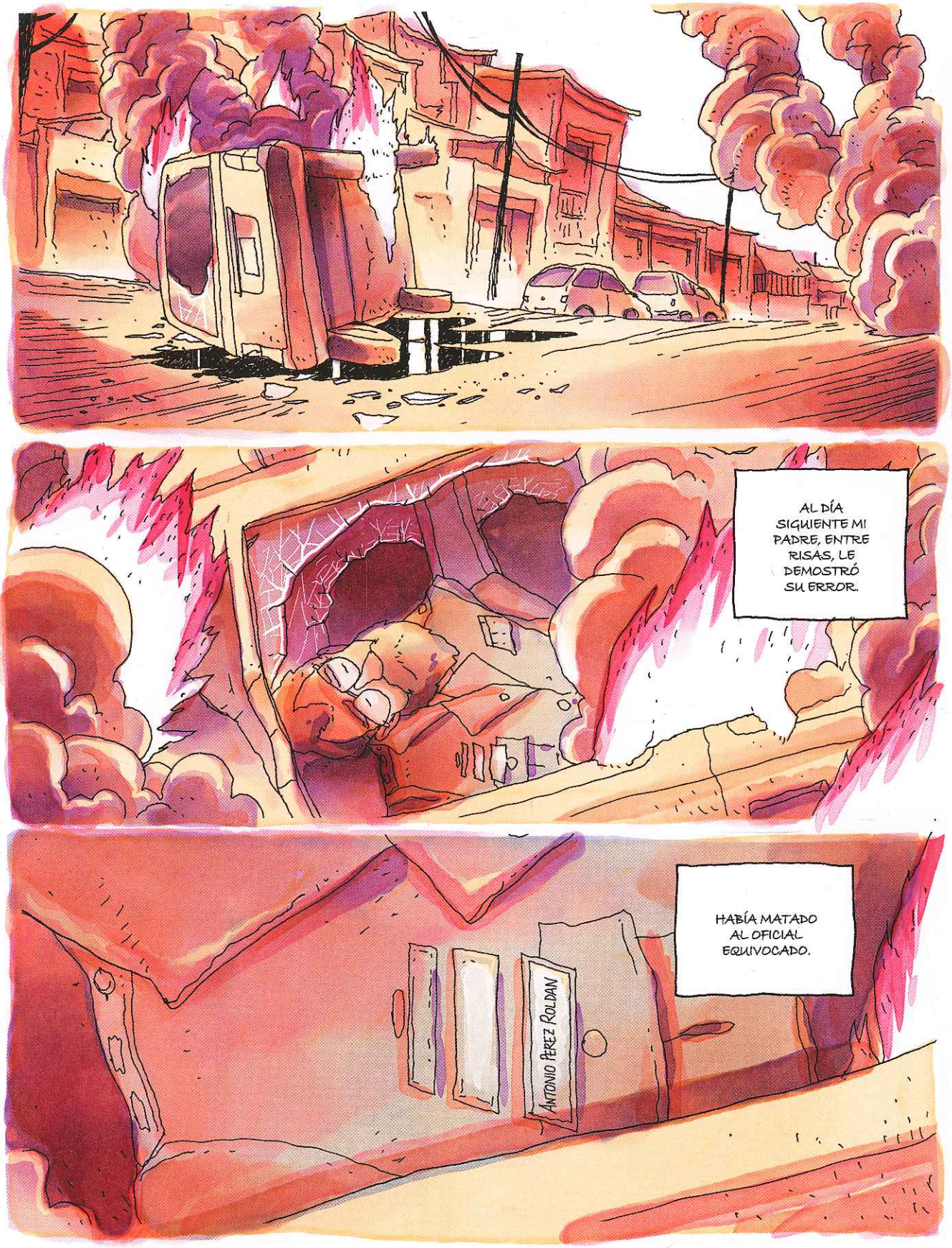

EL POETA SIEMPRE ESTABA ATENTO A TODO, IBA CASI UN MINUTO POR DELANTE DE LOS DEMÁS.
ESO ME SALVÓ LA VIDA...
LA MÍA Y LA DE ÉL TAMBIÉN.


EL POETA NO EMPEZÓ ESTANDO TAN ATENTO A TODO.
¿Dónde está la bala asesina?
¿Dónde está la bala asesina?
casquillo
TUVO QUE APRENDER. PARA QUE MI PAPÁ NO LO MANDASE A VOLAR.


SE BUSCA
128482
PABLO EMILIO ESCOBAR GAVIRIA
SOLICITADO POR LA JUSTICIA
A quien suministre información que permita
UNOS MESES ANTES...
... EL OFICIAL MACEDO DE MEDELLÍN, EN SU AFÁN POR PERSEGUIR A MI PADRE...
... NOS DETUVO EN UN RETÉN POLICIAL.
SIN IMPORTARLE NADA, NOS ENCERRÓ DE MANERA ILEGAL EN UN CALABOZO DURANTE 12 HORAS.
SIN AGUA, SIN COMIDA.
SIN LA LECHE DE MI HERMANITA, QUE APENAS TENÍA 4 MESES DE VIDA.
¡ACÁ NO SE HACE NINGUNA CONCESIÓN A NADIE!


MI PADRE LE JURÓ VENGANZA Y MANDÓ AL POETA A ASESINARLO.
EL PLAN ERA PERFECTO.
EL POETA HABÍA ESTUDIADO TODOS LOS MOVIMIENTOS DEL POLICÍA.
KABOOM
CLICK


Y DETONÓ UN CARRO BOMBA A SU PASO PARA HACERLO VOLAR.


AL DÍA SIGUIENTE MI PADRE, ENTRE RISAS, LE DEMOSTRÓ SU ERROR.
HABÍA MATADO AL OFICIAL EQUIVOCADO.
ANTONIO PEREZ ROLDAN


LO PARADÓJICO FUE QUE AQUEL POLICÍA ASESINADO ERA UN ALIADO DE MI PADRE.
POR SUERTE PARA EL POETA Y PARA TODOS...
... MI PAPÁ LO TOMÓ A BROMA.
Y EL TRABAJO SE TUVO QUE VOLVER A HACER.
HABRÍA QUE DEJARLO EN BOLAS PARA TIRARLO POR AHÍ.
MIENTRAS LE FUESEN FIELES, MI PAPÁ SIEMPRE LES PERDONABA LAS CAGADAS QUE HICIESEN.


¡¿POR QUÉ TANTO INTERÉS EN VER EN BOLAS A GATILLO?!
ANTES QUE NADA... ACÁ NECESITAMOS SABER QUIÉN DISPARÓ, AMIGOS.
... SÍ, SEÑORES, NECESITAMOS ACLARAR ESTO.
PARA DECIRLE AL PATRÓN QUIÉN FUE...

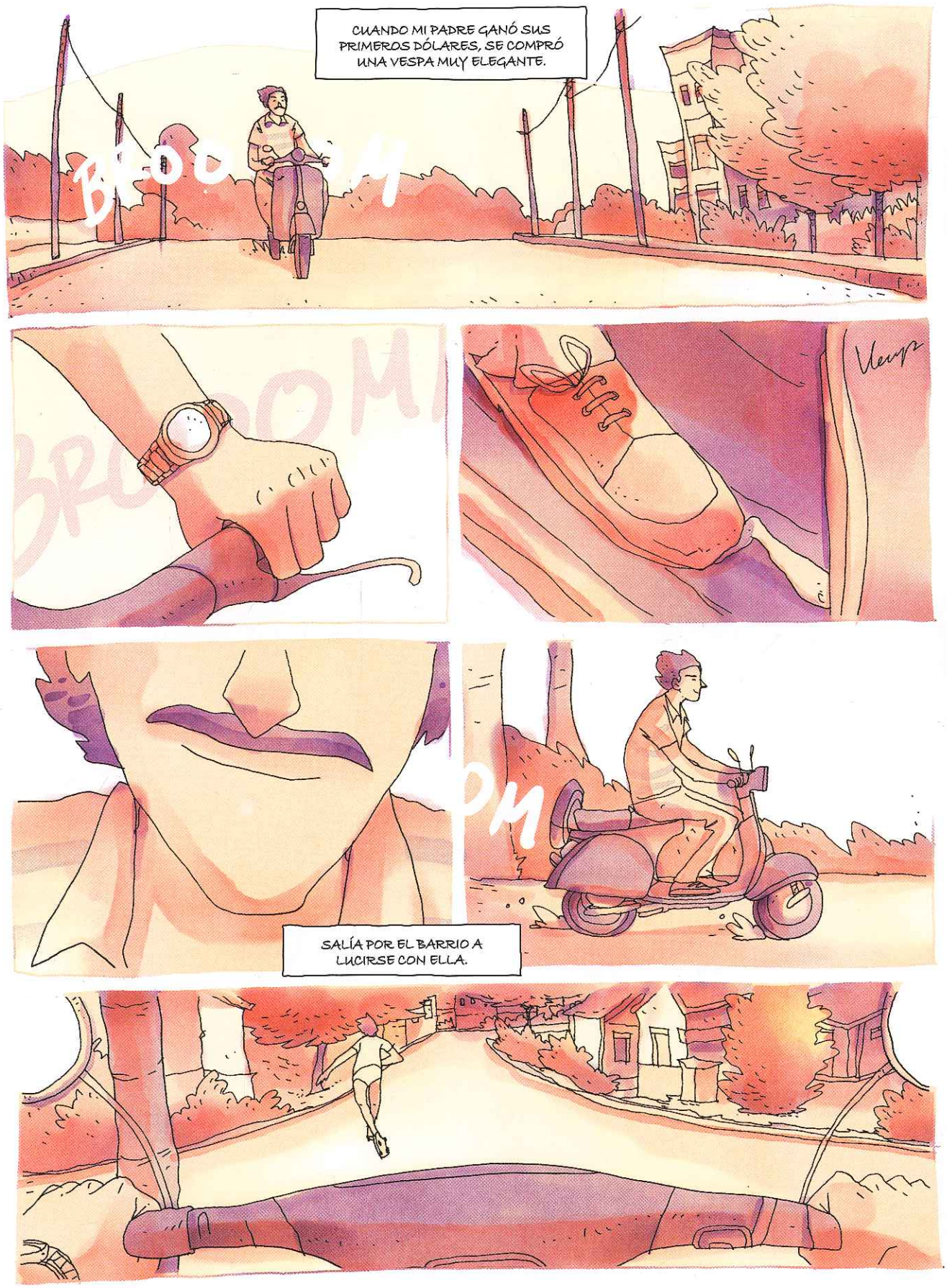

ME PARECE AL PEDO METER AL PATRÓN EN TODO ESTO...
NO SÉ, PARCE, ¡EL PATRÓN VA A QUERER SABER QUÉ MIERDA PASÓ ACÁ!
¡NEGRA, VE A BUSCAR EL AUTO!


¡A LA NEGRA MARÍA NO LE GUSTA QUE LA MANDONEEN!
¡VOY A IR A POR EL CARRO Y TE LO VOY A ESTRELLAR, MALPARIDO! SIEMPRE ME MANDAN A MUDAR EN EL MEJOR MOMENTO.
NO LLORES, JUANCHI, TÚ SABES QUE NOSOTROS SOLO ESTAMOS ACÁ DE PASO.
¡¡DEJÁ DE MIRARME EL CULO, JUANCHI!!
AHORA SÍ, VAMOS A DESNUDAR A GATILLO.


LA NEGRA TUVO QUE APRENDER A MANEJAR DE GOLPE PARA ESCAPAR DE UNA EMBOSCADA.
MANEJÓ MÁS DE 1500 METROS EN REVERSA A LA MÁXIMA VELOCIDAD.
¡PARÁ, LOOCA!
¡NEGRA, DETÉN EL AUTO!
¡¡A ESTOS DOS ME LOS LLEVO POR DELANTE!!
PONK!
¡LA NEGRA SE CONVIRTIÓ EN LA MEJOR CONDUCTORA DEL MUNDO MARCHA ATRÁS!

EL PATRÓN

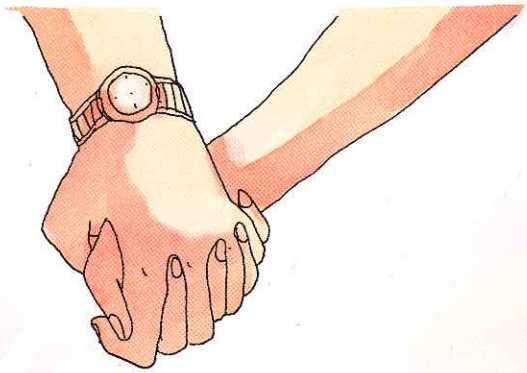
Pablo Escobar
Ambicioso, violento y asesino.
Si lo contradices, mueres.
Padre de familia afectuoso.


CUANDO MI PADRE GANÓ SUS PRIMEROS DÓLARES, SE COMPRÓ UNA VESPA MUY ELEGANTE.
SALÍA POR EL BARRIO A LUCIRSE CON ELLA.

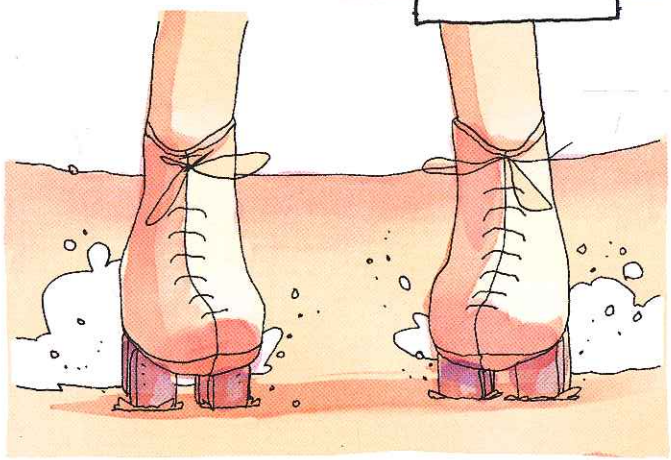

Y FUE POR COMPLETA CASUALIDAD...
... QUE SE CRUZÓ CON MI MADRE UN DÍA.
¡HOLA! ¡QUÉ PATINES MÁS BONITOS! ¿QUÉ EDAD TIENES?
¡SOY MUY JOVEN PARA USTED, SEÑOR!

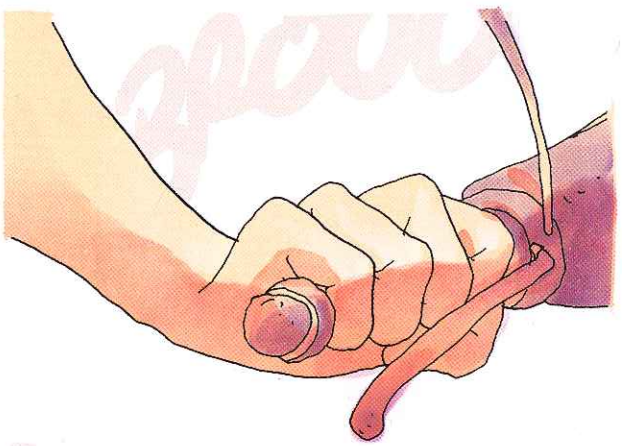

EL AMOR NO SABE DE EDADES.
TENGO 13 AÑOS, PERO TODOS DICEN QUE PAREZCO DE 16.
YO TENGO 23, PERO DICEN QUE PAREZCO DE 17.
¡JA, JA, JA, JA!
¡JA, JA, JA, JA!
¿TE LLEVO?

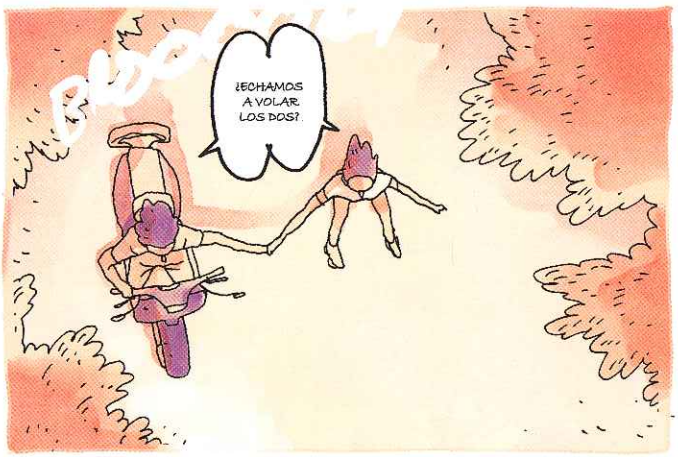
UNO DE LOS PRIMEROS REGALOS QUE MI PAPÁ LE DIO FUE UN DISCO DE LEONARDO FAVIO: "LA CONOCÍ EN EL PARQUE".

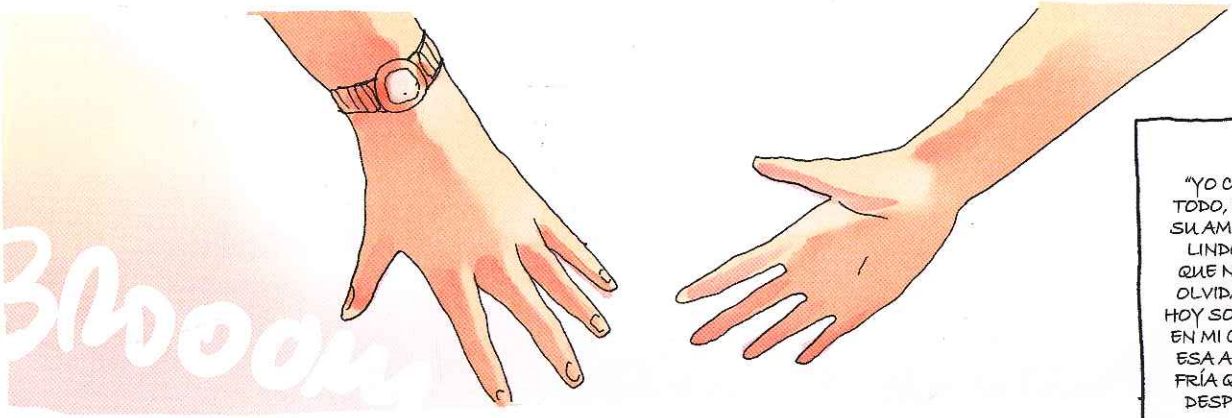


"LA CONOCÍ EN EL PARQUE, IBA DESCALZA CUANDO YO LA VI, CREÍA QUE PODÍA YO ALCANZARLA, PERO MÁS TARDE SUPE QUE ME EQUIVOQUÉ".









"YO CREÍA EN TODO, CREÍA EN SU AMOR, ERAN LINDOS DÍAS QUE NO PODRÉ OLVIDAR, PERO HOY SOLO QUEDA EN MI CORAZÓN ESA ANGUSTIA FRÍA QUE DA EL DESPERTAR".


BUOO

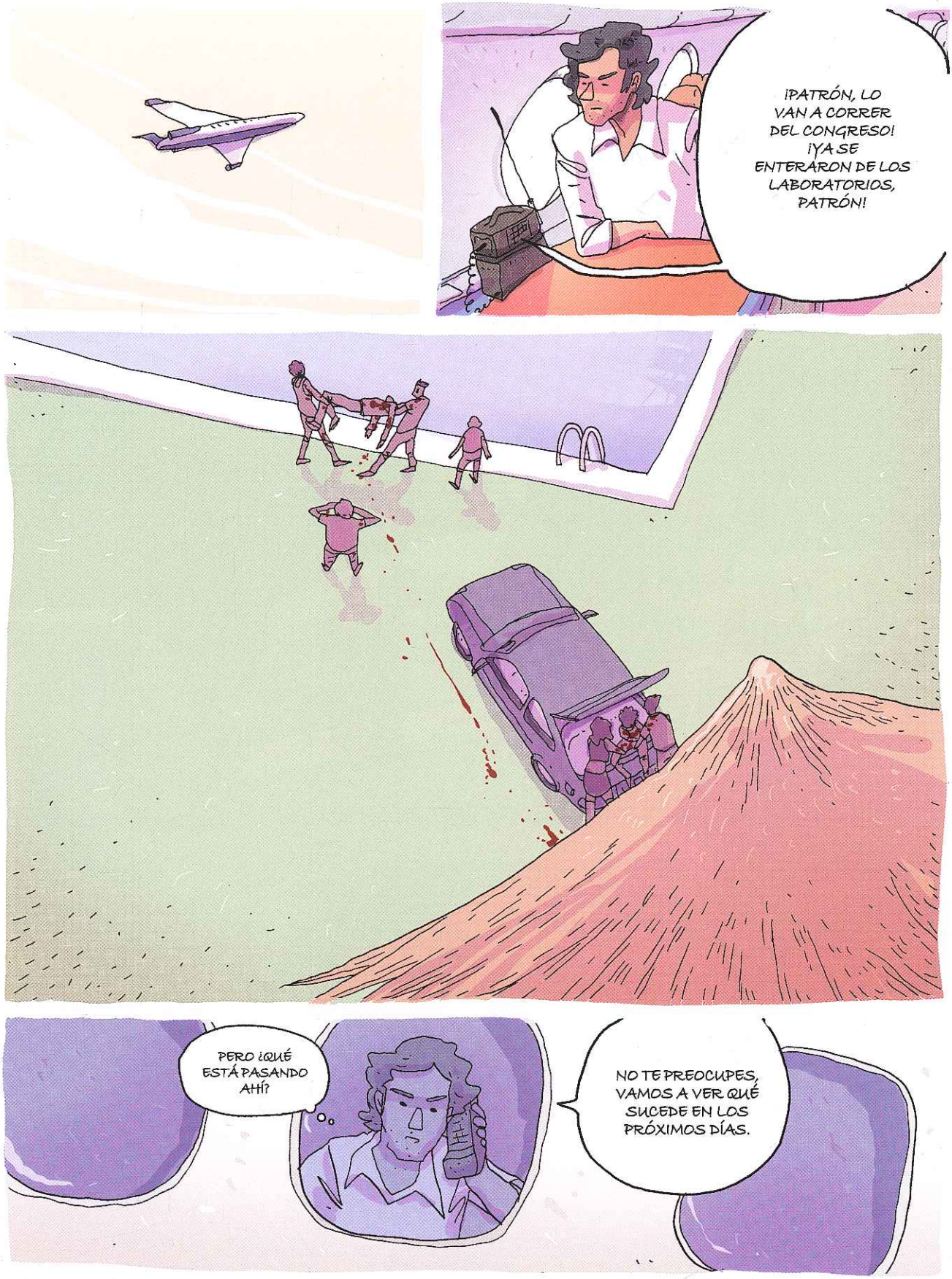

CLACK!
¿QUIÉN ERA ESA PELADA?
ES LA FUTURA MADRE DE MIS HIJOS.
SI A MIS 30 AÑOS NO TENGO A ESA PELADA Y UN MILLÓN DE DÓLARES EN MI CUENTA BANCARIA, YO ME SUICIDO, AMIGOS. ¡ANÓTENLO!
ASÍ ERA MI PADRE, LO QUE QUERÍA LO PEDÍA O LO TOMABA.


¡ESTÁS EQUIVOCADO, JUANCHO, ESTÁ FRITO!
¡MALPARIDO! ¡ESTÁ RESPIRANDO!
'TAMOS JODIDOS, RUBÉN.
¡¿POR QUÉ MIERDA NO RESUCITA EL OREJAS?!
¡DALE UNOS CACHETAZOS, AMARGO!
¡NO PUEDE SER!
¡PAM!
¡PAFF!
¡PARA, LO VAS A MATAR TÚ AHORA!
¡VAMOS A AYUDARLE A DESPERTARSE!
PATRÓN, NOS ACERCAMOS A LA CASA.


DURO, EL MUNDO DE LA POLÍTICA...


DA GUSTO VOLVER A CASA.


¡ESTÁN LOCOS!


¡PATRÓN, LO VAN A CORRER DEL CONGRESO! ¡YA SE ENTERARON DE LOS LABORATORIOS, PATRÓN!
PERO ¿QUÉ ESTÁ PASANDO AHÍ?
NO TE PREOCUPES, VAMOS A VER QUÉ SUCEDE EN LOS PRÓXIMOS DÍAS.


¡GATILLO NO SABE NADAR, AMIGOS!


¡QUE APRENDA AHORA!


LISTO, A OTRA COSA.
¡ACÁ NO VISTE NADA! LA BOCA CERRADA, ¿SÍ?
TODA UNA TUMBA.
¡ESTE NO SALE VIVO!
¡APUESTO 100 DÓLARES A QUE SALE!
ACEPTO.
HECHO.
¡NI EN PEDO PONGO 100 DÓLARES!


¿QUÉ HUBO, AMIGOS?
BIENVENIDO, PATRÓN.
TODO LISTO.
HOLA, PAPI.
¡LLEGÓ EL TROMPA! AGÁRRATE UNOS BILLETES Y TE CALLAS PARA SIEMPRE.
¡O LE DIGO AL PATRÓN QUE TE QUISISTE CARGAR A GATILLO!
¡ESO LO TENDRÁS QUE PROBAR, PERRA!
¿Y POR ALLÁ, EN QUÉ ANDAMOS? VENGAN, QUE TENEMOS MUCHO TRABAJO.
¿Y GATILLO? ¿DÓNDE ANDA?


¡ACÁ, PATRÓN!
OK, AMIGOS, ACÁ NO HA PASADO NADA.
¡AHORA, TODOS A TRABAJAR!

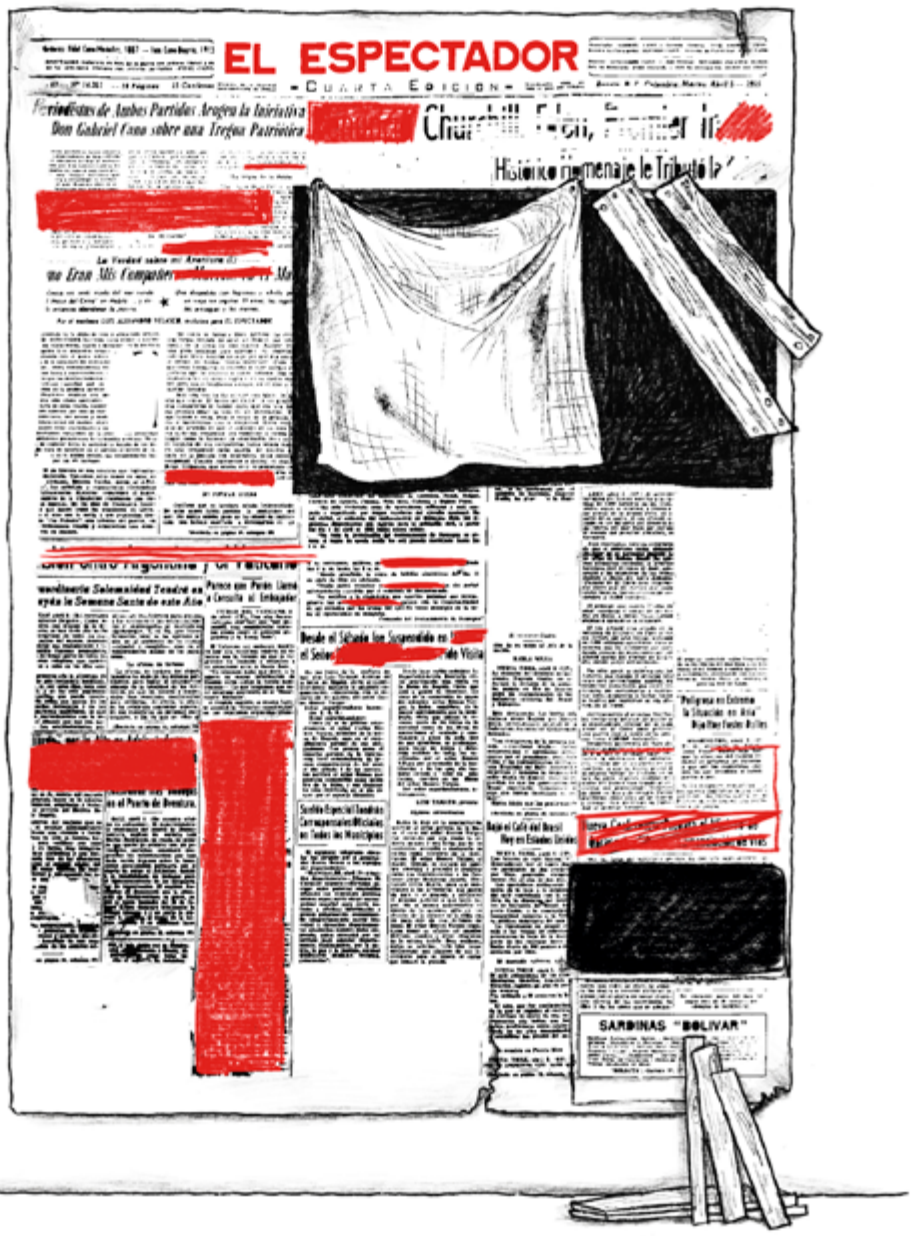
BIOGRAFÍA ILUSTRADA

DON GUILLERMO

ISBN: 978-628-7666-62-7 Colombia, agosto de 2025 6 capítulos

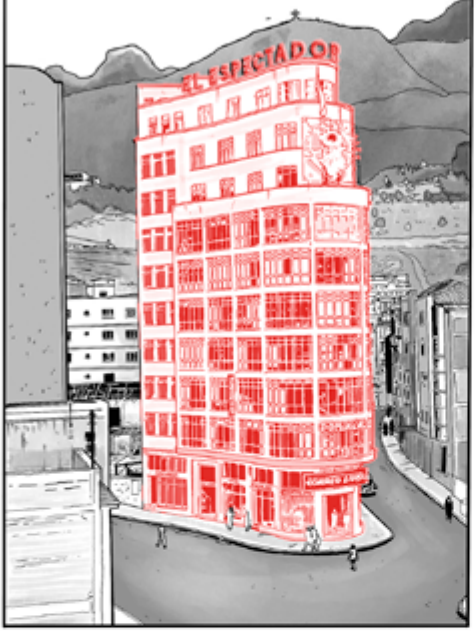
GUION: PABLO GUERRA - **DIBUJOS:** LAURA V. ÁLVAREZ, LAURA GUARISCO, PAVEL MOLANO, DIEGO ZHAKEN RUIZ, FRANC SARA - **COLOR:** NIÑA TIGRE

Después de los ataques del 6 de septiembre de 1952, Guillermo Cano fue nombrado director de El Espectador.



Durante el gobierno del presidente encargado Roberto Urdaneta Arbeláez, así como en la dictadura de Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, fue un férreo defensor de la prensa frente a la censura gubernamental.

Durante la dictadura de Rojas Pinilla, la censura estatal se hizo cada vez más asfixiante.



Guillermo Cano lideró varias iniciativas en contra de esa presión.

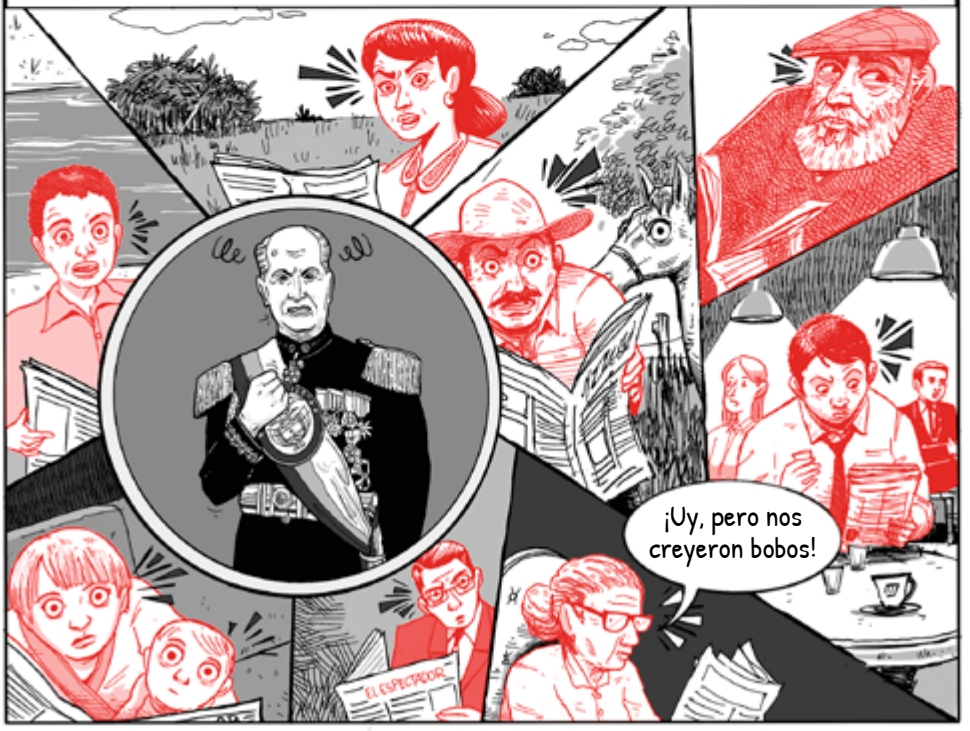
Bajo su reciente dirección del periódico, don Guillermo había tenido que enfrentar el control constante de los censores.

La justificación para el control severo de la información era la seguridad nacional.

Ante la presión del gobierno se convocó una asamblea de periodistas el 29 de octubre de 1953, a la que asistieron más de 130 delegados.

Si bien en ese momento la presión logró que Rojas Pinilla levantara la censura, lo hizo bajo la idea de que...

Una vez su mandato fue ratificado en 1954, Rojas Pinilla usó un decreto contra la injuria para seguir limitando el derecho de la ciudadanía a la información.



En medio de estas tensiones, el Magazín Dominical publicó uno de los hitos en la historia de sus publicaciones literarias.

El Magazín Dominical publicó en 1955 la serie de Gabriel García Márquez sobre el naufragio de Luis Alejandro Velasco, que luego se convertiría en el libro Relato de un náufrago.

Como era costumbre, el texto de Gabriel García Márquez fue acompañado por ilustraciones de Merino.

La relación de El Espectador con Gabriel García Márquez empezó en 1947, con la publicación del cuento «La tercera resignación».

El 20 de diciembre de 1955, en la primera plana, respondieron con un editorial en el que exponían la multa de $ 10.000 pesos impuesta por la Dirección de Información y Propaganda, por publicar noticias que afectaban el orden público.

Pero el 6 de enero de 1956, El Espectador recibió una nueva multa por $ 600.000 pesos de la Dirección Nacional de Impuestos por supuestas anomalías en la declaración de 1953.

La familia Cano, en forma de protesta, cerró el periódico por tiempo indefinido.

El 20 de febrero de 1956, cuarenta y cuatro días después del cierre de El Espectador, apareció El Independiente, bajo la dirección de José Salgar y Darío Bautista.

En la columna «El "periodismo sitiado"», del 30 de mayo de 1958, don Guillermo afirmó:

«(Desde 1948) los lectores colombianos recibieron durante diez años un periódico que no era el periódico que quisimos darles cada día.

A pesar de todos los daños sufridos, los periódicos de la generación del periodismo sitiado tenemos, sin embargo, mucho que agradecerle a la censura...

Gracias a ella, hoy sabemos mejor que nunca lo que vale la libertad, como instrumento de justicia y como freno a la arbitrariedad.

Sabemos cuánto cuesta mantenerla y cuánto la odian los tiranos y los delincuentes».

El 10 de mayo de 1957, Gustavo Rojas Pinilla renunció a la presidencia en respuesta al paro nacional que empezó unos días antes.

Una multitud celebró la renuncia de Rojas Pinilla vitoreando y llevando en hombros a Gabriel Cano.


Sin embargo, una vez más, los momentos de alegría serían interrumpidos por hechos violentos.
TIC-TAC
TIC
TAC
¡BLAM!
En la madrugada del 27 de mayo de ese mismo año, estalló una bomba frente a las oficinas de El Espectador.


Edición de la Tarde
conchita


EL ESPECTADOR
"EL ESPECTADOR" Reaparecería el 7 de Agosto de 1958
Preguntado don Gabriel Cano acerca de la reaparición de "El Espectador", solicitada por numerosísimos ciudadanos, respondió lo siguiente:
"Agradezco vivamente el generoso interés de mis amigos por la inmediata reaparición de "El Espectador", pero es mi propósito que el periódico vuelva a publicarse el 7 de agosto de 1958, si en esa fecha se ha conseguido, como todo autoriza para esperarlo, el pleno restablecimiento del sistema popular y republicano en Colombia. Mientras tanto, EL INDEPENDIENTE continuará prestando su modesto pero decidido concurso a la empresa de la restauración moral, institucional y democrática del país".

En 1983, el ministro de Justicia Rodrigo Lara Bonilla fue señalado de corrupción por Pablo Escobar, en represalia por la labor del ministro en contra del narcotráfico.

En ese momento, Escobar se presentaba ante el país como un comerciante que había sido incluido como suplente a la Cámara de Representantes por el movimiento Alternativa Liberal.

En medio de estas acusaciones se produjo un descubrimiento clave en las oficinas de El Espectador.

El 25 de agosto de 1983 se volvió a publicar una noticia de 1976, que revelaba que Escobar había sido arrestado en Ecuador por narcotráfico.

ESPECTADOR

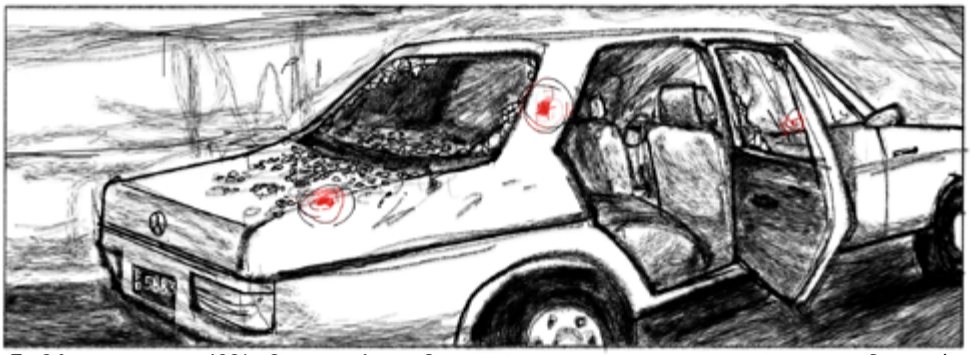
Caen 39 Libras de Cocaína

Detenidos Seis Narcotraficantes en Itagüí

En 1976 Escobar estuvo preso

El impacto de esta noticia llevó a que Escobar intentara detener la distribución de El Espectador en Medellín.

Pero sus esfuerzos no dieron fruto, y la fachada de hombre respetable de Escobar se derrumbó. Empezó la etapa más cruenta de la guerra del narcotráfico contra la sociedad.



El 30 de abril de 1984, Rodrigo Lara Bonilla fue asesinado en las calles de Bogotá.

Atacaron a los políticos que se atrevían a denunciar sus actividades ilícitas.

Los periodistas que desafiaban a la mafia también eran considerados enemigos.


16 de diciembre de 1986. Entrevista de Cecilia Orozco a Guillermo Cano.
A mí no me gusta eso de estar figurando, pero la gente tiene que saber que el periodismo está amenazado.
Sé de personas que escriben en los periódicos que sí han sido amenazadas de muerte y que han sido asesinadas.
Eso afecta de alguna forma la libertad de prensa en Colombia
Esa es una amenaza que tenemos los periodistas encima. Yo salgo de aquí del periódico por las noches y no sé qué va a pasar.


17 de diciembre de 1986.
EL ESPECTADOR
DIARIO DE LA MAÑANA
BLA, BLA, BLA...
JAJAJA


¡PUM!
¡PUM!
¡PUM!
EL ESPECTADOR
DIARIO DE LA MAÑANA
¡PUM!

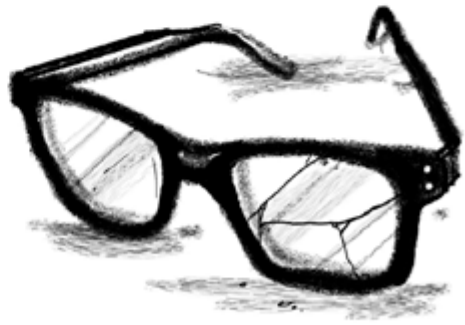
¡PUM!..

¡PUM!

¡PUM!

¡PUM!

AG-5000



Don Guillermo fue asesinado
el 17 de diciembre de 1986.

•••

El dolor del atentado y su significado, para una sociedad que veía cómo sus ideales de libertad y honestidad eran pisoteados.

Al día siguiente se citó una marcha del silencio para pedir justicia, aunque esta nunca llegó.

ROUTLEDGE INTERDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES ON LITERATURE

COMMODIFYING VIOLENCE IN LITERATURE AND ON SCREEN

The Colombian Condition

Alejandro Herrero-Olaizola

ROUTLEDGE

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1 Narco-Stories Globalized

Pablo Escobar and Excess Consumption

Stories about the life and times of Pablo Escobar (1949–1993)—the infamous drug cartel leader and popular folk hero—are a perfect example of how Colombian cultural products have been bought and sold by publishing and media conglomerates. More often than not, stories about drug-related violence in Colombia provide global audiences with the kind of Latin American dark exoticism that has now long been embraced and promoted by global publishing and media outlets. Such accounts foreground the historical value of personal experiences about the Colombian condition as they claim to offer international audiences a tighter connection between those who narrate stories of violence and displacement and those who actually suffer them first-hand. But, in so doing, they also perpetuate a dire outlook for the Colombian nation and the precarious nature of its irreparable violent condition, thus reinforcing a certain level of addiction to all bad things Colombian on the part of readers, critics, and media outlets. As such, violent drug-related scenarios emerging from Colombia are easily commodified in best-selling fiction, film and TV, and art, and successfully marketed in North America and Europe precisely because they provide international audiences with a sense of history, justice, and false proximity between them and localized marginal subjects.

Narco-stories, which I broadly define as storytelling about incessant violence in a lawless society ruled by paid assassins (*sicarios/as*) and drug cartels, have become one of the most profitable (and widely available) commodities in such global cultural markets. Examples can be found in large variety of cultural products that construct through words or images (as the case may be) stories about the drug trade, ranging over best-selling Colombian fiction (e.g., novels by Fernando Vallejo, Jorge Franco, Laura Restrepo, Juan Gabriel Vásquez), Hollywood films and television series (e.g., Netflix's *Narcos*), and art (e.g., Fernando Botero), as well as other forms of mass popular culture. These have been encapsulated, as Aldona Pobutsky reminds us, under the umbrella term *narco-cultura*—a cultural expression of drug trafficking aesthetics and "narco lifestyles in television, literature, music, architecture, language, fashion, the female beauty ideal, and social rituals, including those associated with death" that has

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captured global audiences' preoccupations with "mass commodities, excess, and instant gratification" (*Narcoculture* 3).

It is fed, for example, by the visual and artistic representations of Pablo Escobar that began to emerge since his death on December 2, 1993. Hunted down and shot in Medellín by a special group of the Colombian police and military (thanks to technological and intelligence support from the US), the photographs of Escobar's killing are both a gruesome spectacle and an incredibly rich source from which writers, artists, and filmmakers have drawn their creations.[1] In the photographs it is particularly disturbing to see the captors' joyfulness as they pose in front of the camera with Escobar's obese corpse turned into the coveted trophy of a global manhunt. Escobar's bloodied dead body lies inert on a rooftop near his hideaway in Medellín while the army's special forces smile to the camera in celebration of the hunted prey. This watershed moment for Colombia's history marks the end of Escobar's reign over the global drug trade. Surely, authorities needed to show Escobar's body to the world (not unlike what had happened many years before with Che Guevara's corpse in Bolivia) as a tangible proof that Colombia's public enemy number one was forever gone. But that was not the end of Escobar in the cultural field, since his demise began his legacy in national and global imaginaries, quite the contrary. A proliferation of cultural products often designed for global consumption revived (as it were) the controversial drug lord as both a ruthless criminal and a benefactor for the poor who used his fortune to build homes and soccer fields.[2]

Escobar's criminality has been captured visually in the artworks of Fernando Botero and local muralists from Medellín. Botero's memorable narco-paintings of the late 1990s, such as *Death of Pablo Escobar*, *Autobomba*, and *Massacre in a Better Corner*, enhance the druglord's legacy and iconic status. Similarly, James Mollison's *The Memory of Pablo Escobar*—a photographic memoir of the drug lord through thousands of visual artifacts—features an extensive collection of kitschy art displayed in murals and paintings by local artists whose works try to capture Escobar's double life: that is, the world's most-wanted criminal and the revered modern-day Robin Hood that helped the lower classes. One of the most telling examples in Mollison's book is Hernando Orozco's oil canvas, in which Escobar's hands, solidly grounded, reach out into the slums now connected through a wooden bridge that leads to a new soccer field and housing complex provided by the opportune philanthropist. Saintly representations of Escobar appear, for instance, in Germán Arrubla's painting *Heroes and Anti-Heroes* where the drug baron is placed in an altar next to none other than Diana, Princess of Wales, as reproduced in the images published in Mollison's book (18–20). But it is perhaps Botero's iconic painting *Death of Pablo Escobar* that sums up quite graphically the imprint of Pablo Escobar's legacy in Colombian cultural production and its repercussions for our global understanding of narcoculture. The painting shows a gigantic Escobar

being showered with bullets over the tiny rooftops of Medellín while in the background there is an anticipation of serenity from the perfectly aligned abode homes and the greenery of the mountains. The narco-story told in this painting contrasts sharply with the gruesome photographs of the hunting down of Escobar by Colombia's special forces that circulated as proof of his death, and, by extension, of his grip on the global drug trade (Figure 1.1).

Botero's depiction of the drug lord's gigantic body is in sharp contrast with the miniaturization of Medellín in the background. At the moment of his death he is standing large, in excess, dodging many of the bullets targeting his body. Despite having been hit in the forehead and abdomen, the drug lord (magically) remains combative, holding up a gun on his right hand in a final act of defiance while remaining literally on top and ready to combat the final assault against his life and continue to reign in the drug trade. For Héctor Hoyos, in this painting "Botero renders his subject in the style of a grandiose, larger-than-life kingpin, annoyed at the insect-like bullets that bring him down" (132). Through this humorous and excessive portrayal, Botero actually alters and inverts the positionality

Figure 1.1 Death of Pablo Escobar (1999), oil painting by Fernando Botero (50cm x 38cm). Museo de Antioquia, Permanent Collection.

and composition that we see in the photographs of Escobar's killing, where the drug lord is gunned down and lying prone on the rooftop for the amusement of the army's special forces and onlookers. Likewise, Botero's painting provides us with a powerful composition that illustrates the durability of Escobar's imprint onto the national imaginary six years after his death—a watershed moment that is almost impossible for Colombians to ignore, and, in particular, for cultural producers who keep on returning to this iconic moment of collective historical remembrance that defines the landscape of Colombian narco-stories.

Escobar's demise (and the impending sense that he was no longer a threat for those who dare represent him in a negative light) became the catalyst for the proliferation and consumption of narco-stories in Colombia and beyond—in particular, those taking place in Medellín's slums (*comunas*) and exploiting sexual desire, poverty, drugs, and desperation. Through the gripping visuals of Escobar's death, international audiences were made to feel more aware of Colombia's harsh realities, reassured in their knowledge, and "closer" to the struggles facing its marginalized communities. Such proximity and presumed familiarity reinforce the idea of "Colombia, the violent nation" overtaken by drug trafficking and suffering from chronic violence. Interestingly, the literary field has embraced Pablo Escobar as the emerging figure that informs much of the Colombian cultural production for the global market while other actors in the nation's violent history, such as the FARC and ELN guerrillas, have not quite made it to the global cultural market as the kingpin's iconic legacy has achieved.

But to understand the surge of narco-stories in contemporary Colombian cultural production, it is important to keep in mind the appropriation of dirty realism that became prevalent in the literary and cultural field of the 1990s and onwards (as discussed in this book's introduction). Indeed, the commodification of dirty realism in the global market shaped the imprint of narco-culture that originates in and feeds on Pablo Escobar's life and death. My main focus in this chapter is not to reconstruct the myriad representations of Escobar and how these may vary in historical accuracy or truth (if that is ever possible when examining narco-trafficking). Instead, I move away from reconstructing the capo's life as the world's most notorious kingpin in the 1980s and 1990s and turn to cultural production. Thus, I explore the role of Escobar in narco-storytelling as a global cultural phenomenon that precisely draws on the economic accumulation and excess that is characteristic of the illicit drug trade Escobar himself created. Obviously, it is hard to equate the profits from a global commodity like cocaine with those from cultural commodities such as narco-stories, but it is reasonable to propose that the commodification and distribution processes are not really that far apart—particularly when the global culture industry has had no qualms about appropriating such excess and economic accumulation in their guilt-free efforts to promote narco-stories in the international cultural

market: "*narconovelas*," Héctor Hoyos writes in *Beyond Bolaño: The Latin American Global Novel*, "are primordially about power and accumulation, about fabulously successful capitalists who, perhaps paradoxically, have no place in the established capitalist world order" (154).

In this regard, terms like narco-capitalism or narco-accumulation are very useful to understand the market's logic behind Escobar's cocaine trade, which originated in the cultivation of coca leaves in the rural enclaves of Latin America (e.g., Peru, Bolivia, Colombia) and moved up the ladder quickly into local economies and onto international money laundering thanks to transnational laissez-faire consumer capitalism characteristic of the neoliberal economies burgeoning in 1990's Latin America. Gareth Williams illuminates us on this point when he affirms that

> narco-accumulation is just one more name for the contemporary will to power of capitalism, in which capital projects itself, as always, in two directions simultaneously: (1) toward the absolutization of commodity and surplus value; and (2) toward the minimization […] of the value of labor.
>
> (110)

As a result, narco-accumulation fosters the movement of commodities such as "drugs, guns, and bodies" (111) with the State's tacit approval, without any legal intervention, and, in many cases, with the cooperation of rogue elements within the State's apparatus. Relating to this idea, Hermann Herlinghaus sees in Escobar a confluence of late capitalism with a rupture in its own "geopolitical rules" that allows for a liberal and universal democratic model, in which violence and neoliberalism go hand in hand to disregard "the authority of the super-state" (*Narco-epics* 95–97; 107).

Narco-stories partake in this effort as they often promote and engage in a culture of deregulated capitalist excess, or more precisely, in excess consumption, as illustrated by lavish mansions, flamboyant lifestyles, haciendas that resemble theme-parks and zoos, or trophy women "beautified" with gallons of silicone. Unnecessary expenditure rules the excess consumption in the narco world, or at least, in the narco world being portrayed in cultural production and being consumed by readers and filmgoers worldwide. Michael Taussig aptly describes this type of expenditure affiliated with the narco world as indulging in *dépense*—a concept coined by Georges Bataille to refer to unproductive spending or "toomuchness," whereby consumption exceeds what would typically be regarded as normal or sufficient consumption. The hilarious example Taussig provides to illustrate his point takes us to one of Escobar's ringleaders, José Gonzalo Rodríguez Gacha, whose toilet paper at home was embossed with his initials in real gold: "That's a lot of gold down the chute when you consider how many initials he had. JGRG" (*Beauty* 11). Examples like these are illustrative of what Taussig sees as today's

economy of delirious consumption—something that Pablo Escobar and his ilk engaged in on a daily basis and is now being shared as part of a global culture of "excess consumption."[3]

Consumption is irremediably linked to a global economy that is anchored in (let's call it) "instant capitalism," in which monetary transactions and purchases are just a click away from handheld devices. This is also true for cultural commodities and, in the case of Latin America, it is often based on the extraction of peripheral localities that can easily circulate worldwide and be monetized. In this sense, Hoyos argues that the emergence of a global Latin American novel—to which I would add globalized narco-stories—coincides with international events such as the Fall of the Berlin Wall and the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989 when supra-national spaces and a new understanding of globality "from the ground up" begin to take shape in earnest. From this historical juncture (at the height of Escobar's grip on the drug trade), heretofore peripheral localities, such as the ones originating in Latin American enclaves like Medellín, cannot be ignored in the transnational canon of world literature (5–6). While marginal characters from Latin America's periphery take center stage in such transnational canon, so does their monetization through cultural commodification, as is the case with Colombia's *sicarios* and other marginal characters of the drug trade.

With this transnational and global economic context in mind, in this chapter I situate Colombian narco-stories in the literary field through global novels such as Fernando Vallejo's *La virgen de los sicarios* (1994) and Juan Gabriel Vásquez's *El ruido de las cosas al caer* (2011), which I see as exemplary cases of Pablo Escobar's cultural, political, and socio-economic repercussions for Colombia's national identity worldwide. Second, I examine the appropriation of narco-stories as a global literary genre that has been commodified beyond Colombia's confines as in the case of Vietnamese-Australian writer Nam Le's *The Boat* (2008). And third, I turn to film and television to explore how media outlets (HBO, Caracol) have appropriated narco-stories for popular consumption. In particular, I analyze *Pecados de mi padre* (2009) and *Entourage* (2009) as two distinct representational models of Escobar's cultural and political legacy, and the proliferation of Colombian narco-soap operas and their penchant for (and promotion) of excess consumption through global media.

Locating Narco-Stories in Fernando Vallejo and Juan Gabriel Vásquez

Fernando Vallejo's publishing success in recent Colombian narrative is particularly paradigmatic of the global publishing trend that seeks out specific marginal localities (e.g., Medellín) to be turned into cultural commodities. He is also a paradigmatic case of a new kind of "superstar author" in the global market, whose success has to do with the recurrent

recreates and imagines the spaces that constitute such settings and the individuals who inhabit them. Given the critical and publishing success of *The Boat*, it is safe to conclude that its personalized approach to crime, its definition in a recognizable (approachable) local space, and the global projection of these features have become a winning formula for a profitable cultural production of globalized narco-stories, with all the ethical issues that such success entails.

Escobar as Media Entertainment: *Pecados de mi padre* and *Entourage*

It was only a matter of time until narco-stories would leap from the literary and artistic fields into the vast and ever-expanding world of media, particularly film, television, and streaming platforms. Visual media quickly enthroned Escobar as a legendary kingpin, villain and iconic popular hero for global mass consumption. As the recent Netflix series *Narcos* (2015–2017) illustrates, Escobar continues to be a cash cow for media distribution networks, which have contributed to perpetuating the dire outlook of the Colombian nation and its irreparable violent condition. And, more often than not, they have ignored the relationship between those who narrate stories of violence and displacement and those who actually suffer them first-hand. For Pobutsky, "*Narcos* provides a somewhat false sense of cultural accuracy for a public with little exposure to Latin America" given "its simplistic take on Colombia" and painting "the country as enchanting yet corrupt beyond repair" (*Narcoculture* 232). This assessment is right on target (pun intended) and illustrates the reductionist media portrayals of Escobar's cultural and political legacy, which often enact Masiellos's *levedad histórica* as it pertains to US views on Latin America. HBO's engagement with Escobar partakes in this reductionist approach, despite the network's efforts to seek "cultural weight" on its media productions and not just being a source of popular entertainment. In this section, I precisely address these two representational modalities of the drug lord's legacy: one underscoring pop culture consumption of Escobar—the series *Entourage*—and the other reflecting on the suffering of Escobar's victims, the documentary *Pecados de mi padre* (*Sins of My Father*).

The series *Entourage* is loosely based on the life of actor Mark Walhberg (who is an executive producer for the series) and tells the personal story of an up-and-coming actor from Queens called Vincent Chase and his New York childhood posse, his entourage. In the third season of the series (2009), Colombia begins to take center stage when Chase—aided by his savvy agent, the foul-mouthed, fast-talking Ari Gold—lands the starring role in the film *Medellín*, a biopic about the life and times of Pablo Escobar. *Medellín* is intended to be Vincent Chase's leap from B-movies to a serious dramatic role that will consecrate him as one of the most promising young actors of his generation. The film had

a price tag of 35 million dollars, which producers hoped to pay for once it premiered at the Cannes Film Festival. To promote *Entourage*'s fourth season, HBO created the website *medellin-the-film.com*, which included reviews, cast, synopsis, and trailer for a movie that didn't actually exist outside the internet. The website showcased *Medellín* as a real, bona-fide blockbuster Hollywood film and, more importantly, as an example of the kind of Latin American stereotyping that is characteristic of the US media and entertainment industry. While the website is no longer active, HBO's trailer for *Medellín* can still be seen on YouTube. In it, Escobar appears as a ruthless, disheveled criminal covered in blood and surrounded by murdered bodies and explosions. This is, indeed, a run-of-the-mill biopic about Escobar's criminal life for mass popular consumption, as illustrated by the narrator setting up the film: "The year was 1989, and one thing was on everybody's mind: cocaine. And the man behind it all was Pablo Escobar. He made millions to achieve his dreams, and killed anyone who got in his way."[18]

Medellín occupies much of the fourth season of *Entourage*, which opens with what appears to be a real documentary by a British media journalist about the making of the film that includes interviews with Vincent Chase and fictional director Billy Walsh, rehearsal scenes, as well as on-location shots in Colombia (in fact, the San Fernando Valley in California). In them, we can see what would lead the film industry to invest in a real film entitled *Medellín* and in a documentary about its making. A similar degree of authenticity can be observed in the scenes of the movie's premiere at Cannes, which resemble a real-life event with all the glamour that we are accustomed to see in film festivals of this nature. But the premiere of *Medellín* at Cannes turns out to be a complete flop and, much to the producers' and actors' chagrin, some booing is heard just as the audience begins to exit the theater before the final credits roll. Angered by their reaction, *Medellín*'s director, the eccentric Billy Walsh, bursts out loudly "What the fuck are you French faggots doing? Show some respect for the Colombian people and watch the credits!" Finally, back in the US, the movie is poorly reviewed by Richard Roeper (in the fifth season of the series), who calls it "one of the worst films of the year." In the end, *Medellín* goes straight to DVD and the career of Vincent Chase is put on hold.

What interests me about *Entourage*'s *Medellín* is that, through the iconic figure of Pablo Escobar, it illustrates well how the entertainment industry commodifies Latin America's harsh realities for the worldwide market. It shows that narratives about Escobar have become a perfect example of the way Colombian cultural products are now bought and sold by media conglomerates. More often than not, personalized stories about drug-related violence in Colombia demonstrate a shared interest in trafficking the personal life of Escobar, and in providing global audiences with the kind of Latin American dark exoticism now embraced and promoted by global publishing and media conglomerates. While

it is true that *Entourage* aims at providing a distanced commentary of such practices, I would argue that it ultimately perpetuates—despite its tongue-in-cheek tone—well-known stereotypes about Colombia (and, by extension, Latin America) as a corrupt society ruled by drug lords and their sexy women, and powerful villains like Pablo Escobar. Lacking in *Entourage*'s *Medellin* is, of course, any kind of reflection on or reference to Escobar's own political career and, more importantly, to the tight connections between drug trafficking, the guerrilla, and politicians in contemporary Colombia. What we see here is the "unbearable lightness of history" (Masiello's *levedad histórica*) and an insistence on spectacular cultural difference (e.g., "show some respect for the Colombian people") that are typical of mass-marketed Latin American cultural production. This trend is further emphasized by HBO's interest in manufacturing the illusion that *Medellín* (the film) actually exists. Another important component in the South by North market operations that are now typical of the culture industry is that HBO has been credited for the recent interest in Escobar biopics such as in the case of *Loving Pablo* (2017) or *Escobar: Paradise Lost* (2014).

To diversify its portfolio of narco-stories beyond the frivolous appropriation of the drug lord's legacy in *Entourage*, HBO cleverly invested in one of the most compelling cases of trafficking the personal around the figure of Pablo Escobar: the 2009 documentary *Pecados de mi padre* by Nicolás Entel.[19] Produced by Red Creek and selected for competition in the Sundance Film Festival in 2010, HBO secured the US television exclusive rights for this documentary and premiered it on October 4 of that year. In contrast to *Medellín*'s Escobar, *Pecados de mi padre* is clearly anchored in historical documentation and can be regarded as high-brow entertainment (and, arguably, as a documentary that does show respect for the Colombian people). It narrates the voluntary exile of Escobar's son to Argentina and his return to Colombia 12 years later to meet with two prominent political families—the Galán and the Lara Bonilla—whose patriarchs were victims of the drug violence in the 1980s and 1990s, and died as a consequence of Escobar's killing orders. The entire documentary relies on a very powerful scene, the actual face-to-face meeting of the victims' families and Pablo Escobar's son, which took four years to arrange and film.

The reconciliation attempt is played for the camera, and, while the possibility of the Galán and Lara Bonilla families embracing Escobar's son is mentioned in the conversation, there is, understandably so, a tense atmosphere in the meeting room. The gruesome killings of Rodrigo Lara Bonilla (Minister of Justice in 1984) and Luis Carlos Galán (the presidential candidate for the Colombian Liberal Party in 1989) to the hands of Escobar's *sicarios* and the media spectacle that ensued their assassinations certainly obfuscate an easy reconciliation between the Galán, Lara Bonilla, and Escobar families (and, by extension, a national reconciliation). The confessional, self-accusatory, and forgiving tone of

the conversation makes us wonder whether it was necessary for this first, very personal (and clearly painful) encounter to be played out in front of the camera. The documentarian and family participants agreed to this encounter and, in so doing, put their personal life at the disposal of yet another media spectacle concerning Pablo Escobar's criminal legacy. For long dead as he is, he remains ever so present in the room, as we can see in the scene. Granted, this reconciliation scene is more attuned to a television talk show than to the decidedly reductive representation of Escobar that occurs in Hollywood films. And, in that sense, it provides a historically grounded understanding of the intricate relationship between politics and narco-trafficking in Colombia.

But *Pecados de mi padre* is, above all, a conversation among orphans of the nation who represent the political climate that has defined contemporary Colombia for the rest of the world. It is thanks to the death of their fathers that their sons can now join forces in order to achieve reconciliation in a new political climate. In this regard, it is also worth noting that the heirs of the ill-fated justice minister and presidential candidate have run successfully for office in Bogotá's City Council and the National Senate. As elected representatives, these politicians had a lot to gain—besides their genuine interest in reconciling with the son of Escobar—with respect to their own political careers in agreeing to participate in constructing a more gentle legacy to the fierce narco-politics of the 1980s and 1990s.[20]

The sins of the father are thus "cleansed" in front of the camera. Juan Pablo Escobar has changed his name and is now Sebastián Marroquín. He has rejected the patronymic relationship with his father the drug lord, and can now be forgiven and duly acknowledged as a victim of the paternal legacy. But, as Rocío Davis suggests,

> the film's structure is thus complicated by the need to claim filiation before rejecting its consequences and legacy […] although Marroquín's story involves his rejection of his father's life, the film ultimately traces his acceptance of Pablo Escobar as his father […] which involves admitting his identity and making up, somehow, for his father's crimes.
>
> (59)

Therefore, the process of cleansing Escobar's sins and crimes does not fully materialize, as the film proposes that Sebastián Marroquín really *is* Juan Pablo Escobar and that legacy cannot be completely erased. And, as it turned out years after the film, Sebastián took back his birth name, Juan Pablo Escobar Henao, and capitalized on his father's legacy by publishing the memoir *Pablo Escobar, mi padre* (2014) and launching the fashion line Escobar Henao inspired by his infamous father.

For their part, the sons of Luis Carlos Galán and Rodrigo Lara Bonilla continued their political careers in the Senate and City Council

and, somehow, also capitalized on the reconciliation efforts afforded by participating in Entel's documentary. By bringing back to present times their suffering as victims of Escobar, they were again duly acknowledged as heroes of the nation and as qualified interlocutors in the Colombian peace process, which was to come in the years following the documentary. While there was hope that *Pecados de mi padre* could mark an interruption of the cycle of violence and revenge that has become associated with the recent history of Colombia, all indications are that reconciliation between the Galán, Lara, and Escobar families remains to be seen.

HBO's distribution of *Pecados de mi padre* is also indicative of—yet another—commodification of Pablo Escobar's legacy. In this respect, I find it very interesting to compare the two different beginnings the production company devised for, respectively, the television and cinematic release of the documentary. The latter begins with an idyllic scene of tranquility set in the midst of the Colombian jungle, where birds surrounded by bright colors appear to chirp the day away. As we follow the traveling camera, we notice laborers manufacturing coca paste, then carrying it out along the hillsides and into the city. As the focus moves from land to sky, we finally see a bird's eye view that shows a broken map of Colombia. This opening foreshadows the prevalence of drug consumption and its influence on the national imaginary. The spectator is thus immersed in an almost psychedelic experience (as if under the influence of drugs) produced by an animation technique that paints fluorescent colors over live-action images. At first sight, this opening would appear to anticipate a mood of harmony, but attention rapidly shifts to the harsh realities of drug trafficking. This shift, however, does not occur in the television opening for the Discovery en Español channel, which carried the broadcast of *Pecados de mi padre* in Latin America before the documentary became available on streaming platforms. In the Discovery version, right from the start the narrator identifies Pablo Escobar as a powerful villain, who dominated Colombian politics and daily life for the better part of the 1980s and early 1990s. The narrator's lapidary opening statement—"Colombia, a violent nation where an assassination is followed by revenge, where a man stands out above all: Pablo Escobar"—leaves little room for idyllic images of life in Colombia, and replicates the portrayal of Escobar in *Entourage*'s *Medellín*.

What we see here is that the kind of media packaging proposed by Discovery en Español (Latin America), HBO, and others that relish in Escobar's legacy is largely based on personalized narratives claiming to be historically grounded (and not simply pulp). Such narratives clearly operate according to the aforementioned South by North market dynamics that are reminiscent of colonial practices: Latin American sites such as Escobar's Medellín are now being expropriated for worldwide consumption and providing international audiences with appealing stories of survival, adventure, corruption, marginality, sex and violence, justice, and reconciliation. Similarly, it is clear that media producers like

Discovery Channel or HBO, even when they try to move away from such dynamics, end up perpetuating the practice of trafficking in the personal for global consumption.

Colombian Narco-Soap Operas: Cocaine and Crime for Global Consumption

In a special issue of *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos* (2008), María Fernanda Lander lays out a narco-geography based on the map of Latin America as outlined by government agencies that fight against drug trafficking. The route proposed by Lander leads us to explore narco-violence in the Mexican state of Sinaloa (Gabriela Polit Dueñas), Mexican and Colombian narcocorridos in the transnational context (Miguel Cabañas), and neo-realistic aesthetics in the *sicaresca* (Héctor Fernández L'Hoeste). Lander's approach aims at offering a response to the critical interest around the incursion of Latin American localities ravaged by crime and social chaos within the media conglomerates of cultural production. As Diana Palaversich points out in her study on the Mexican *narco-novela*, "there is no doubt that the emergence of the 'narco' genre is due, among other factors, to its proneness to marketing and to the ease with which this topic can be transformed into fiction" (104). This phenomenon also responds to what Arjun Appadurai has pointed out about geographies: in the global era they are no longer marked by a specific scale or space, but rather by disjunction, their different speeds, axes, and points of origin, that is, by a relational and contextual framework that he calls "a world of flows" (178) and that María Helena Rueda sees as "the result of a series of displacements" ("Escrituras" 391). Following such a contextual framework of transnationality, I propose to explore the narco-soap operas as a media genre that has global and local cultural ramifications.

In this regard, it is quite illuminating to draw parallels between the history of the drug trade in Colombia and the current channels of commodification of narco-stories since a similar pattern of production and consumption emerges. If localized enclaves in Colombia supplied the world with drugs beginning with marijuana from the Santa Marta region in the 1970s and cocaine from remote labs dispersed in Antioquia in the 1980s and 1990s, narco-stories have followed a similar supply chain, albeit licitly and with much less profit margins, from Medellín to the world. The rudimentary cocaine labs that blanketed the Antioquia region under Escobar were not really that far off from the artisanal production of cocaine by the Muiscas, Colombia's indigenous tribe linked to the legend of El Dorado. Drug lords like Escobar soon realized that the mass production of chemically processed coca paste in rudimentary local labs for worldwide consumption was possible at a low cost. In Escobar, we can see the figure of a magician—a "rainmaker," and an "omnipotent provider" in Herlinghaus's words—who was capable of creating a

INTRODUCTION

COMICS AND MEMORY IN LATIN AMERICA

Jorge L. Catalá Carrasco, Paulo Drinot, and James Scorer

Remembering's dangerous. I find the past such a worrying, anxious place.
"The past tense," I suppose you'd call it. Ha ha ha.
THE JOKER

Since the publication of Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart's *Para leer al Pato Donald* in 1971, scholars of Latin America have increasingly turned to comics as objects of study. The analytical framework privileged by most of these scholars has moved beyond Dorfman and Mattelart's somewhat restrictive cultural imperialism hypothesis influenced by dependency theory. Comics, and more recently graphic novels, are increasingly understood as cultural artifacts that open unique and compelling windows not only onto mass or popular culture but also onto social, cultural, and political processes that have helped define the region since comic art began to appear in mass media in the early twentieth century (and in some cases even before) (see, among others, Foster 1989; Rubenstein 1998; Merino 2003 and 2011; Lent 2005; Fernández L'Hoeste and Poblete 2009). This book presents new research from scholars working in different disciplines, including literary theory, cultural studies, and history. The contributions explore the ways in which comics and graphic novels on and from Latin America address and express ongoing

processes of memory formation around a number of historical processes. Comics and graphic novels offer a particularly fruitful perspective through which to examine the work of memory in Latin America.

This book builds on the rapidly expanding field of Latin American comics studies. Comics scholarship on and from Latin America has in recent decades resulted in a number of works, including studies on (1) comics as popular culture (Foster 1989); (2) comics as cultural artifacts representing the advent of modernity in the region (Merino 2003); (3) the history of comics throughout the continent (Lent 2005); (4) comics as agents in the configuration of national identities in Latin America (Fernández L'Hoeste and Poblete 2009); and (5) the ideas of canon and margin in the articulation of critical thinking around comics in the Latin American intellectual context (Merino 2011). In Latin America, such initiatives as Alvaro de Moya's first exhibition in Brazil of *quadrinhos* in 1951 or the Primera Bienal de la Historieta y el Humor Gráfico in Argentina in 1968 gave way to early scholarly approaches to comics. These include *C-Línea* in Cuba from 1973 to 1977 and the quarterly Cuban *Revista latinoamericana de estudios sobre la historieta* (RLESH) from 2001 to 2010.[1] Country-focused studies, such as Anne Rubenstein's *Bad Language, Naked Ladies, and Other Threats to the Nation* (1998), about the politics of Mexican comic books, or the collaborative project *Camouflage Comics* (2005), directed by Aarnoud Rommens, about the last Argentine military dictatorship (1976–1983), bear witness to a well-established field. In addition to these, the biannual *International Journal of Comic Art* (IJOCA), established in 1999 and edited by John A. Lent, has consistently included articles dealing with Latin American comics.[2] This edited volume contributes to this body of work by foregrounding the little explored work of memory in Latin American comics.

This introductory chapter examines the history of comics and graphic novels in Latin America, paying particular attention to the production of comics and graphic novels in the countries surveyed in the following chapters. Comics and graphic novels have a long history in the region, although some countries have far more developed comics industries (or comics cultures) than others. While some general trends in the development of the genre are identifiable (for example, the rise of political commentary in comics from the 1960s on), some national comic industries are characterized by idiosyncratic developments that reflect the particular historical processes of each national experience. We also consider the emergence of memory as a field of study and its development in the Latin American context. As a number of scholars have shown, memory has played a key role in the process of transition from

dictatorship and armed conflict to democracy throughout the region since the mid-1980s. It has become a privileged, if always contested, perspective from which to engage with the past—particularly the traumatic past. For some, memory is a medium that has the potential to overcome the historical traumas that have plagued the region.

We examine the interplay between memory as one means of engaging with the past (and the present) and comics, the latter taken as both a cultural form and a cultural artifact. Because of their particular formal characteristics, particularly the way they combine text with graphics, comics have allowed, even encouraged, the development of a series of visual techniques that enable the rendering of memory (or memories) in distinct and often sophisticated ways. As a result, and as students of the genre increasingly recognize, comics offer a distinct platform to relate memory (and time and space) graphically. Comics and graphic novels as material (and, when in cyber form, immaterial) objects operate as mediums or technologies of memory, similar to but also distinct from other memory devices such as photographs, memorials, or museums, which have received far more attention from scholars of memory. Comics elicit and mobilize memories in those who read and enjoy them and enable a particular engagement with the past distinct from that which may be experienced through the medium of, say, a film or a battle reenactment.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF LATIN AMERICAN COMICS

The development of Latin American comics does not differ significantly in format, structure, development, and periodization from its European or North American counterparts.[3] In both continents, the use of images in periodical magazines increased markedly in the 1800s as a result of significant improvements in printmaking techniques such as lithography (1796), chromolithography (1837), and the rotary press (1843). Periodicals became a mass phenomenon following the introduction of offset printing (1875) and the creation of the mimeograph machine (1890). These technologies proved particularly helpful to Latin Americans who sought to articulate discourses around the nation-state and to map out the new political entity in visual terms. They enabled the visual representation not only of landscapes, heroes, fauna, and flora but also of iconographic traditions (Fernández L'Hoeste and Poblete 2009). In turn, these technologies brought about the creation of illustrated satirical magazines that commented not just on local folklore or *costumbrismo* but also on political and social struggle.[4] In this context, graphic artists were able to develop professional careers by securing commissioned

contributions to magazines and newspapers, effectively making use of graphic humor and, later on, comics as a commodity. Audiences, usually with high levels of illiteracy across the region, used visual imagery to participate in social and political life.

The first steps in the medium of comics are largely indebted to pioneers who experimented with the disposition of images in sequence and the combination of text and image. Serialized fictions peaked in the nineteenth century in periodical publications, providing a favorable environment for the development of comics. If the history of comics in Europe owes much to Rodolphe Töpffer, George Cruikshank, and Alfred Crowquill, to mention just a few names, the modern history of comics in Latin America began with the Italian-Brazilian cartoonist Angelo Agostini (1843–1910) and the Spanish-Cuban painter Víctor Patricio de Landaluze (1828–1889).[5] Agostini arrived in Brazil in 1859. In 1862 he was already established in São Paulo as a "pintor-retratista" (Balaban 2005: 62; Augusto 2008: 82). The "romance illustrado," *As aventuras de Nhô Quim ou Impressões de uma viagem à corte*, was published in the magazine *Vida fluminense* in 1869. This is Latin America's first known comics story with a continuing character (Vergueiro 2000; Lent 2005).

In 1905, Agostini launched *O Tico-Tico*, a publication whose main character, "Chiquinho," was a clear adaptation of "Buster Brown" (Vergueiro 2005: 88), a mischievous young boy from a middle-class family who played practical jokes, created by Richard Felton Outcault and first published in 1902 in the *New York Herald* (Gordon 1998: 44).[6] In Cuba, Landaluze introduced the series of local folklore types with *Los cubanos pintados por sí mismos* (1852), and he published caricatures in several satirical magazines of the time, such as *Don junípero*, *El moro muza,* and *La charanga*. The autobiographical "Estudios sobre el mareo," published in *Don junípero* (1864) is a primitive comic, in which Landaluze crafted twelve sequential panels with text at the bottom on a double page, imaging his forthcoming boat trip after leaving Havana (Barrero 2004: 86–87).

These early comics by Agostini and Landaluze, infused by the *costumbrismo* genre that dealt with customs, habits, or traditions, were followed in the 1900s and 1910s by a second stage in the development of comics in Latin America. The widespread use of comics in the U.S. press and the internationalization of U.S. comics through powerful press syndicates in Latin America became highly influential for the emerging national comics industries, as the case of "Chiquinho" demonstrates. By the 1900s, translations of comics from the United States, such as *Cocoliche* (Happy Hooligan) by

Frederick Burr Opper, made it to Argentina, and U.S. comics appeared in newspapers in Mexico in 1902 (Lent 2005: 5). According to scholar Harold Hinds (1985), the first Mexican comic strip was Andrés Audiffred's "Don Lupito" in 1903, and the first Chilean comic strip appeared in 1906, titled "Federico Von Pilsener," in the magazine *Zigzag*. In Peru the earliest examples are found in the modernist magazine *Monos y monadas*, which lasted from 1905 to 1907. Amid European influences (notably the German magazine *Simplicissimus* and Alphonse Mucha's *Art Nouveau*) and the discovery of Japanese impressionism (Barros 2008), Julio Málaga Grenet (1886–1963) experimented with the transformation of a person into an insect or an animal (metamorphoses that had a clear political motive), demonstrating an intimate relationship between illustration and literature. These developments fostered a distinctive style for Peruvian comics in such magazines as *Fray Simplón* and *Fray K-Bezón*, with an anticlerical bent (Sagástegui 2009: 134; see also Lucioni 2001).

The influence and diffusion of U.S. comics explains the structure and design of the first comic in Argentina with continuing characters and the use of balloons to represent characters' speech. In 1912 the magazine *Caras y caretas* published *Aventuras de Viruta y Chicharrón*. This was a copy of the U.S. comic strip *Spare Ribs and Gravy* by George McManus, which began that same year in the *New York American* (Seoane and Santa María 2008: 58). The comic was initially sent to Argentina for publication but, after negotiations failed, local artists Manuel Redondo and Juan Sanuy took over due to the comic's popularity (Gociol and Rosemberg 2003: 65). Three years later, in 1915, the Cuban magazine *Bohemia* published *Aventuras de Pepito y Rocamora* by Pedro Valer (who wrote under the pseudonym of Peter Relav). It continued weekly publication until at least 1922. The adventures of Pepito and Rocamora depicted various slapstick situations of a swindler couple within a local folklore substratum (Catalá Carrasco 2011: 140; 2015: 52–53).

In the first decades of the twentieth century, comics proved successful in securing audiences and helping to sell publications. By the 1930s newspaper comic strips were widespread throughout Latin America. The increasing readership facilitated comics' new format, the comic book: a publication entirely dedicated to comics. Brazil, Mexico, and the United States were the initiators of this process, which led to comics becoming more independent from the newspaper—a reflection of the stability and strength of their respective national comics industries. The first U.S. comic book appeared in 1933. *Suplemento juvenil* was published in Brazil in 1934. The first Mexican comic book, *Adelaido el conquistador*, included Mexican comics and translated

U.S. comic strips and lasted only two years (1932–1933). However, in 1934, *Paquín* became the first Mexican comic book to find a wide audience, soon followed by *Paquito* (1935), *Chamaco* (1936), and *Pepín* (1936). Reflecting *Pepín*'s prominence in the nascent industry, Mexicans began to refer to comic books as *pepines*. By 1940 comic books in Mexico were as ubiquitous as radio programs and more common than cinema (Rubenstein 1998: 13).

The golden age of comics in Latin America peaked in the 1950s through the 1970s, when the output of comics in such countries as Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, and Mexico expanded dramatically. In those years the Argentine Héctor G. Oesterheld, one of Latin America's finest comic script writers, established Editorial Frontera and created several milestone publications in the history of comics, such as *Mort cinder* (1962, drawn by the Uruguayan Alberto Breccia) and *El eternauta* (1957–1959, in collaboration with fellow Argentine Francisco Solano López). Oesterheld was disappeared by the Argentine Junta Militar in 1977 because of his involvement in the left-wing guerrilla group Montoneros, for which he authored *Latinoamérica y el imperialismo: 450 años de guerra* and a second version of *La guerra de los Antartes* in 1974 for the publication *Noticias*, which was closely linked to the Montoneros. Argentina's most famous comic strip, *Mafalda*, was created during this period by Joaquín Salvador Lavado, better known as Quino. *Mafalda* was published in magazines and newspapers between 1964 and 1973, quickly becoming a phenomenon throughout Europe and Latin America.

In Brazil, although *O Tico-Tico* came to an end in the 1950s, the same decade saw the consolidation of several publishing houses and the field was very fertile for new ventures. Horror comics, for example, became the most popular genre of comics in Brazil during the 1950s, while the 1960s was the most productive for Brazilian superheroes (Vergueiro 2009: 158–62). However, the most significant moment in modern Brazilian comics came in 1970, when artist Mauricio de Sousa convinced Editora Abril, one of the largest publishing houses in the country, to publish a comic book with his character Mônica. In similar fashion to the Disney Corporation, de Sousa created a merchandising universe around Mônica in Brazil.[7]

In 1949 the most iconic Chilean comics character, "Condorito," created by René Ríos Boettiger (1913–2000), better known as Pepo, was published in *Okey*. In light of its success in representing Chilean identity, Pepo compiled the first Condorito anthology in 1955. Thereafter, Condorito's predominance in the Chilean comics market grew steadily. Nine anthologies were published in 1983 alone (Fernández L'Hoeste and Poblete 2009: 36–37). The three years of Salvador Allende's Unidad Popular (1970–1973) brought about

an important transformation in Chilean comics with the publication of such political comics as *La firme* (Kunzle 1978 and 2005) and an innovative orientation to children's comics better exemplified in *Cabro chico*. The national publishing house Quimantú tried to counterbalance the pervasive presence of U.S. comics, especially those produced by Disney.

From this effort sprang the most influential text on comics and mass culture in Latin America: Dorfman and Mattelart's *Para leer al Pato Donald* (1971; How to read Donald Duck), first published in Chile in 1971. Hugely influential for subsequent political readings of comics, *Para leer al Pato Donald* deconstructed Disney comics from a Marxist point of view, emphasizing the underlying ideological manipulation in what seemed to be the archetype of innocent comics for children. This critique coincided with the growing politicization of comics, which increasingly reflected the polarization of Chilean society and which constituted political interventions in their own right. During the Pinochet dictatorship (1973–1990) several magazines shut down as a consequence of severe censorship and/or financial hardship, including *El siniestro Doctor Mortis* in 1974, *Mampato* in 1978, and *Barrabases* in 1979. Quimantú was then directed by General Diego Barros Ortiz and in 1977 was sold to a private investor (Pérez Santiago 2003).

In Cuba in the 1930s, Horacio Rodríguez Suriá and Rafael Fornés, along with Pedro Valer, published comics in *Cárteles* and in *Avance*'s supplement "Revista Rosa." Manuel Alonso, Mike Cárdenas, Silvio Fontanillas, and Antonio Prohías (who went into exile soon after the 1959 Cuban Revolution and became a crucial contributor for the U.S. *Mad* magazine with his comic "Spy vs Spy") were other important figures in Cuba's burgeoning comics world. With the Cuban Revolution, new opportunities emerged, ranging from the avant-garde magazine *El Pitirre* (1960–1961) to the satiric communist magazine *Mella* (where Virgilio Martínez and Marcos Behemaras published several comics) until the mid-1960s. The publisher Ediciones en Colores launched four monthlies from 1965 to 1968—¡*Aventuras*!, *Muñequitos*, *Din Don*, and *Fantásticos*—which satisfied the increasing demand for comics. And in 1970, Juan Padrón published in *Pionero,* the first of many Elpidio Valdés's comics, as well as three films in 1979, 1983, and 1996. Cuban painter Roberto Fabelo declared that "Elpidio is one of the landmarks of current Cuban culture" (Padrón 1999: 68). In the 1980s the Pablo de la Torriente publishing house produced the weekly tabloid *El muñe*, the monthly comic book *Cómicos* and the biannual magazine for adults, *Pablo*, thus building on a readership that had already begun to expand after the general boom in adult comics in the 1970s with underground comics. Many of these initiatives

came to an end with the "Special Period," following the collapse of the Soviet Union (1989) and the Socialist Bloc (1991), but comics artists in Cuba remain active, and the main humorous magazine, *Palante* (which began in 1961), stands out for its support of comic strips.[8]

By the 1950s, Mexico had an average of four million to five million comics readers in a nation of twenty-five million inhabitants, which made comics the largest mass-produced and -consumed cultural artifact of the time. Films were also popular, but film audiences visited cinemas no more than twice a week. By contrast, Mexicans listened to the radio and read *pepines* relentlessly (Bartra 2005: 263). A new development emerged in the 1950s and 1960s, the comic novel, with a more traditional narrative structure (introduction, climax, and conclusion), making each comic novel an independent story. Indeed, Mexican comics artists began to target adult readers some forty years before their counterparts in Europe (265). During the second half of the 1960s and early 1970s, Mexican comics reached the high point of their popularity, but clear symptoms of decline began to appear. Eduardo del Río (Rius) began his prolific career at that time with what soon became classic Mexican comics: *Los supermachos* and *Los agachados*.[9] Nowadays, with the lack of stable and financially viable publications, amateurism poses difficulties for professional development. The only genre that has survived the long decline of comics in Mexico are the "Sensacionales" or "La revista vaquera," low-quality black-and-white erotic adult comics, whose pocket-size book format is generally comprised of some one hundred pages, adorned with voluptuous women on their front covers.

In other Latin American countries, where there was no comics industry, comics nonetheless proved influential and became a forum for artistic and political expression. In Nicaragua there had been a weak tradition of comics and political caricatures before the Sandinista revolution. According to historian Christiane Berth in chapter 4 of this volume, the first satirical weekly was the anti-*somocista Los Lunes de la Nueva Prensa* in the 1940s, followed by *Semana Cómica* in the 1950s and 1960s. But the ousting of the Somoza dictatorship in 1979 opened up new spaces for artists in collaboration with the revolutionary government. In Peru, although comics can be traced to the late nineteenth century (Lucioni 2001), the 1950s represented the starting point for a graphic representation of *peruanidad* through an array of comics characters, such as "Serrucho" (an indigenous peasant who had recently arrived in Lima), "Boquellanta" (a blackface child in love with a blonde) and "Sampietri" (a depiction of the typically penniless pleasure-seeker) (Lucioni 2002; Sagástegui 2009: 137).

Among many artists, Juan Acevedo stands out for being the first to organize workshops on popular comics in Ayacucho (1974) and Villa El Salvador (1975–1977) and for introducing overtly political commentary into the comic genre. These workshops led to his book *Para hacer historietas* (To make comics, 1978). Acevedo's most famous comic strip, *El Cuy*, an anthropomorphic comic based on a guinea pig, was published originally in the weekly *La Calle* in 1979 and subsequently in *El diario de Marka*, a left-wing daily, in 1980–1981. A recent edition, *El Cuy tira*, was published in 2011. Acevedo helped pioneer the graphic novel in Peru, with texts such as *Tupac Amaru* and *Paco Yunque* (Nuñez Alayo 2010).[10]

In all of these countries there is clear evidence of comics participating in historical and political processes and of comics depicting those same processes. Given the dynamic and radical nature of Latin American politics and history over the course of the twentieth century, not least in the wake of the Cuban Revolution, comics, just as other cultural forms, have been part and parcel of the contentious debates over memory politics and practices.

MEMORY STUDIES

The field of memory studies, largely nonexistent some thirty years ago, is today well established. Indeed, it is codified in particular ways through the creation of a broad scholarly armature that legitimizes it as a bona fide field of scholarship attracting an increasing number of scholars. A number of journals are dedicated to the field, including the recently launched *Memory Studies* and the more established *History and Memory*. Perhaps more important, studies of memory appear regularly in mainstream disciplinary journals, while monographs and edited collections on all aspects of memory are published by prestigious university presses. Countless conferences are organized each year that bring together scholars from all over the world who work on ever more diverse research and who are organized in transnational memory research networks. Such rapid growth in the field of memory studies has led at least one scholar to speak of a metastasis of collective memory (Olick 2008). Often interdisciplinary, memory studies scholarship takes place in dialogue or within specific academic disciplines such as literary and cultural studies or history. As such, there are arguably different types of memory studies, shaped by different methodologies and concerns, and increasingly by different types of memory studies literatures (Sturken 2008).

Genealogies of memory studies usually reference the sociological work of Maurice Halbwachs on collective memory and the monumental study of *lieux*

de memoire (memory places) directed by the French historian Pierre Nora in the 1980s as seminal moments in the establishment of the field.[11] Later scholars have refined the conceptual toolbox of memory studies, contributing such concepts as cultural memory (Assmann 1995, 2011), postmemory (Hirsch 1992–1993, 1997), prosthetic memory (Landsberg 2004), or multidirectional memory (Rothberg 2009) to account for the myriad ways in which memory manifests itself and is operationalized. These concepts express in different ways how memory is increasingly seen as "a dynamic process that is the result of the practices of individuals and groups" rather than as being contained in objects (Sturken 2008: 74). Cultural memory, Egyptologist Jan Assmann (1995: 130) has written, "works by reconstructing, that is, it always relates its knowledge to an actual or contemporary situation." Memory, therefore, is as much about the present as it is about the past. It is mediated by technologies of memory, such as photographs or indeed memorials, in which memories are experienced and produced. While some memories are indeed expressions of lived experience, others can be inherited (Hirsch 1997) or acquired through involvement in mass culture (Landsberg 2004).

Yet while these scholarly origins, and conceptual refinements, are key to the development of the field, the locus and moment of the irruption of memory discourses and practices, which formed the basis for the establishment of memory studies, is of equal importance. As scholar Andreas Huyssen (2000) has suggested, memory discourses emerged in the 1960s in the context of global processes of decolonization and the emergence of diverse social movements. They were given further impetus in the 1980s when attention focused again on the Holocaust and a globalized discourse on the Shoah emerged. Holocaust memory discourse, Huyssen argues, shaped understandings of and responses to the genocides in Rwanda and the Balkans in the 1990s. These, in turn, helped to further establish memory as a way to engage the traumatic past.[12] By the 1990s, memory discourses had spread to most parts of the world and generated locally specific, if transnationally informed, memory discourses and practices. Indeed, the growth in memory discourses and practices globally has led some scholars, including those working on Latin America, to question whether memory has generated its own political economy and whether such a development risks trivializing the work that memory does or the projects of transitional justice that often engage it (Bilbija and Payne 2011).[13]

In Latin America, memory discourses and practices emerged in the context of processes of democratization and armed conflict resolution throughout the 1980s and 1990s. These processes were characterized, at least initially,

by postdictatorial or postconflict settlements (most of which were imposed unilaterally) that included amnesties for perpetrators of human rights abuses and, more generally, a politics of amnesia that, so some claimed, would enable countries like Argentina and Chile to leave behind the trauma of the past. In this context human rights organizations and civil society groups such as, most famously, the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires, began to challenge the postdictatorial settlements and to mobilize politically and culturally. As memory entrepreneurs, they began to articulate a memory discourse consonant with their political objectives. A politics of memory (or memory struggles or battles for memory) over the experience of military dictatorship developed, pitting so-called memories of salvation, which drew on narratives that focused on the ways in which the armed forces had intervened to save the nation from Communist threats, against human rights memories, which homed in on the abuses perpetrated by the armed forces and on the need to challenge the culture of impunity that they had imposed.[14]

The establishment of Truth Commissions in several Latin American countries played a key role in the evolving politics of memory. Truth Commissions in Argentina, Chile, Guatemala, Peru, and other countries gave added legitimacy to the challenges posed to the memories of salvation promoted by perpetrators of human rights abuses, such as amnestied generals in the Southern Cone or authoritarian rulers like Peru's Alberto Fujimori. In most cases, the Truth Commissions had as an explicit or implicit objective to establish a narrative on the past that could become official (and hegemonic) and overcome the fractious politics of memory. However, as a number of scholars have shown, Truth Commissions rarely succeeded in implanting such a narrative and, as a result, more often than not became caught up in, rather than being able to overcome, the politics of memory.[15] This outcome owed in part to the fact that often the memory of salvation had powerful backers. But this was only part of the story. In the Peruvian case, for example, a memory discourse put forward by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación, or CVR) at the national level proved of little use to, and indeed came into conflict with, the everyday practices of some of those people trying to reform communities that had been fractured by conflict. These people therefore needed to generate their own mnemonic practices that were not always commensurate with the memory practices privileged by the CVR.[16]

In studying memory discourses and practices in Latin America, scholars have paid particular attention to how memory is mobilized in the context of particular memory sites, such as monuments like the Ojo que llora in

Peru or the Parque de la Memoria in Buenos Aires or places associated with human rights abuses in times of dictatorship or conflict, such as the Escuela de Mecánica de la Armada (ESMA) in Buenos Aires or Villa Grimaldi in Santiago de Chile, which have sometimes been referred to as trauma sites.[17] However, scholars have focused their attention more and more on other, initially less obvious and less material, "sites," or perhaps more properly, technologies of memory. Indeed, scholars increasingly recognize the potential of a whole range of media for mobilizing memory and therefore for functioning as technologies of memory (Sturken 2008). Such media include visual and performance art, music, digital artifacts such as YouTube or Facebook, landscapes, and, of course, comic books and graphic novels.[18] In the main these media constitute, as historian Cynthia Milton (2007) has called them, "unofficial modes of truth telling" and as such are best understood as alternatives to the "official" memories that both Truth Commissions and state-sanctioned memorials seek to present. However, as numerous studies show and as several of the chapters in this volume confirm, neither the official nor the alternative modes of truth telling are uncontested.

The field of memory studies in Latin America is intimately linked to the politics of memory that shape, and are shaped by, historical processes of democratic transition and postconflict settlements. However, scholars are starting to examine memory in other historical contexts or, to put it differently, scholars are increasingly acknowledging the role that memory plays in how Latin Americans make sense of the past, and not just the past shaped by local inflections of the "long" Cold War (the periods of military rule in the Southern Cone, the civil wars in Central America, or the Shining Path insurgency in Peru). Historian Paulo Drinot (2011), for example, has examined how memory discourses on the War of the Pacific (1879–1884) inform the way that Peruvians and Chileans perceive each other (and themselves). Cultural historian Ana Lucia Araujo (2010) has also approached the topic of Atlantic slavery from the perspective of memory. Studies such as these point to the still largely untapped potential of memory, whether in its guise as collective memory, cultural memory, postmemory or prosthetic memory, to act as a productive process for thinking about Latin America past and present, beyond the still dominant focus on the second half of the twentieth century. Comics and graphic novels can amply fulfill this potential.

COMICS AND MEMORY

Given that Latin America has played host to the Cold War act of disappearance

and acted as the testing ground for global neoliberal policies that are highly suspicious of holding on to the past, it is unsurprising that the region's comics and graphic novels have played a significant role within the huge corpus of cultural productions that address this history of upheaval and absence. In the Southern Cone alone, to take one illustrative corpus, the dictatorships of the 1970s and 1980s have recurred in graphic form, whether mimetically or obliquely. On the one hand, comics magazines such as *Fierro a fierro* in Argentina or *Trauko* in Chile provided a sphere where activities and interests otherwise repressed by military rule—especially sex, drugs, dress, music, and other forms of counterculture—could be celebrated. On the other hand, comics took the dictatorships and the legacy of trauma as their subject matter.

The artist Carlos Reyes (2011) has highlighted how in *Trauko*, for example, the threat of authoritarianism was evident in stories such as "Si una desconocida te ofrece una flor," written by Leo Prieto and drawn by Patricio De la Cruz (in 1989), which related how a police officer takes advantage of a vulnerable street seller. More recently, scholar Aidalí Aponte (2011) has read the volume *Zombies en la Moneda* (2009) as an attempt to engage with the "disappearance" of the Chilean dictatorship itself within the country's collective memory. In Uruguay the graphic novel *Acto de guerra*, drawn by Matías Bergara and written by Rodolfo Santullo (2010), which draws together four fictional stories based on real-life stories of the Uruguayan dictatorship, has had considerable success. In the wake of works addressing the Argentine dictatorship, including *Buscavidas*, *La batalla de Malvinas*, *Perramus*, and *Sudor sudaca*, Carlos Trillo and Lucas Varela's recent *La herencia del coronel* (2010) provides a sinister portrait of a military repressor's son struggling to come to terms with his sexual and violent fetish for dolls in the postdictatorship period.

Works such as these have played a key function as sites of memory, from the physical copies of historic comics productions, which circulate among collectors and fan clubs, to discussion pages and forums that have provided opportunities for readers and consumers to debate the past. Indeed, the nature of the comics market has meant that during the time of political upheaval and in its aftermath, comics have often been able to respond with great speed and actuality to historical events and debates in the public sphere. The relatively low cost of production, the manner in which comics are often shared between enthusiasts, and the blend of the visual and the written that makes up comics means that they have the potential for fast distribution and dissemination among a large, and often diverse, reading public. At the height of the Argentine dictatorship and despite strict censorship, for example, the

satirical comics magazine *Humor* was able to sell some 350,000 copies every fortnight (Ostuni et al. n.d.: 5–6).

Argentina offers some good examples of the ways that comics function as sites of memory beyond the page, having an increasing impact in and on the public sphere. The disappearance of Héctor G. Oesterheld in 1978, one of the most famous victims of the dictatorship, provided a cultural figurehead for the brutality of the dictatorship. An early example of the way that comics were used to frame that disappearance can be seen in the well-known poster "¿DONDE ESTA OESTERHELD?" included in the October 27, 1983, edition of the magazine *Feriado nacional*. The image, drawn by Félix Saborido, depicts the Avenida de Mayo in Buenos Aires, filled with a silent crowd carrying a banner that demands the return of the comics writer. In a clever fusion of comics history with human rights marches, the protesting crowd is entirely made up of characters taken from Oesterheld's works, including Sargento Kirk, Ernie Pike, Mort Cinder, and El Eternauta. The latter, a famous time traveler, was used to pay homage to Oesterheld in a stencil campaign that began in the city of Rosario in 2006. The wanderer went viral via graffiti throughout the country, enshrining the figure as a symbol of resistance. More recently, the artist Lucila Quieto has drawn on the legacy of Oesterheld, fusing scenes from his series *Sargento Kirk*, which relates the friendship struck up between a disillusioned U.S. soldier and Plains Indians in the nineteenth century, with photographs of the 1968 uprising in Córdoba, the Cordobazo, in artworks that play with cultural and political history to construct new visions of the past. Comics thus constitute sites of memory that elicit and mobilize memories of the past, a politics of the present, and a project for the future.

Of course, many comics also recount past events on and through the page as well, adding a further dimension to the way they function as sites of memory. Often, and particularly in the field of graphic biography, the intention is simply to use comics to provide a visual history, a graphic retelling of the past, an approach evident in, for example, several graphic depictions of Latin American lives, including *Castro* (Kleist 2010), *Gabo: Memorias de una vida mágica* (Pantojo et al. 2013), or the graphic biographies of Ernesto "Che" Guevara analyzed by James Scorer (2010)—namely the 1968 work *Che: Vida de Ernesto Che Guevara* (Oesterheld, Breccia, and Breccia 2008) and the more recent *Che: A Graphic Biography* (Rodriguez 2008) and *Che: A Graphic Biography* (Jacobson and Colón 2009). Other works draw heavily on the past to provide a historical context within which to locate a fictional narrative. Oesterheld, for example, made extensive use of history in many of his

fictional works: in *Ernie Pike* (1957–1971) he used a World War II journalist to highlight the brutality of conflict for victors and losers alike, and in *Sargento Kirk* (1953–1973) he turned to the frontier struggles of nineteenth-century U.S. history to think through concepts of colonialism and heroism. Similarly, Juan Acevedo's two volumes on Tupac Amaru (1987–1988) recount the life of the leader of the late eighteenth-century Andean rebellion that shook the Spanish Empire.[19] In these works, historical events, periods, and characters (whether fictional or not) are presented with little or no framing that affects the nature of the narrative itself. As a result, the process of history telling and memory are often not self-consciously presented as a theme for reflection.

In other works, however, the comic form is expressly used as a means of engaging with the nature of retelling the past and with practices of memory. Certainly other cultural mediums have their own particularities and potencies when it comes to memory, but comics can mobilize the past in particularly challenging and productive ways. The way that comics can "spatialize memory" (Chute 2011: 108), and use the panel structure to allow for a multiplicity of temporal moments and for moving forward and back in time, indicates how they invite a series of "negotiations" between the reader and the text-image over which path to take when engaging with the narration of time on the page. In some cases, the multilinear narrative lines that result (Bredehoft 2006: 885), combined with the empty spaces of the gutter, have been deployed by comics creators to try and capture the unreliability of single-narrative pasts and the inaccessible voids that inevitably emerge in the process of remembering. Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, the seminal work in any analysis of comics and memory, is a case in point, mobilizing the "trauma fragment" not only to connect past and present (Hirsch 1992–1993: 26) but also to highlight memory's unreliability and the tensions between truth and history, symbolized by the author's treatment of Vladek not remembering the orchestra at Auschwitz (Spiegelman 2011: 29–31).[20] Though obviously not a Latin American work, *Maus* (in a similar vein to the work of Joe Sacco) has been pointed to by scholars like Ana Merino (2010) for its testimonial nature. Latin America is innately tied to the history, development, and theorization of testimony as a memory practice.[21]

Such ties to testimony, itself a hotly contested form of memory, means that it is unsurprising, as this book demonstrates, that Latin American comics creators have also turned to the comic form to express and engage with memory. In *Che: Vida de Ernesto Che Guevara*, for example, Oesterheld's narrative is split between two interweaving histories: the story of Che's life on the one hand (drawn by Alberto Breccia) and his final days in Bolivia on

the other (drawn by Enrique Breccia). It is not just the patchwork nature of the narrative, moving back and forth from past to present, that engages with memory; it is also the dramatically different drawing style of Breccia father and Breccia son. Alberto's highly detailed, complex frames, with his sometimes experimental use of graphic patterns, relate to the more precise nature of the "agreed" historical narrative. Here too we find facsimile copies of Che's birth certificate (Oesterheld, Breccia, and Breccia 2008: 10) or his handwritten farewell letter to his children (56), images that exaggerate the authenticity of this part of the narrative. Enrique's frames, on the other hand, are drawn with much less detail and with greater use of block areas of black and white. The shapes of his figures are less precise, and some characters have childlike faces, exaggerating the fantastical, mythic nature of these passages. Enrique's stylistic approach relates more directly to the nature of retelling Che's Bolivian experiences, which were reproduced from Che's own campaign diary and thus more subjective and personal. The dual narrative reflects the beginnings of the transformation of Che the historical figure to Che the myth.

Other stylistic means of engaging with the past in comics can be seen in works like *La herencia del coronel* (Trillo and Varela 2010), where a color shift is used to distinguish between the narrative present (full color) and the memories of the protagonist (blue tone, with the occasional use of red for the images of torture), or *Parque Chas* (Barreiro and Risso 2004), a series comprised of stories told to the protagonist by different inhabitants of the eponymous neighborhood in Buenos Aires. On the first page of the episode titled "Batalla de otoño," for example, one frame includes both past and present by having the foreground of the image depict the hands of the storyteller pouring sugar into his coffee cup inside the bar, whereas through the window we can see his former boyhood self walking down the street with his friends. Such simultaneity of times can also be seen in *Beya (Le viste la cara a Dios)* (Cabezón Cámara and Echeverría 2013), an expressive critique of enforced prostitution. On one page the narrator's voice (expressed via text) initially describes the abuse that was happening to the protagonist, before shifting tenses to describe that abuse as if it were taking place in the present (30). At the same time, the images, which are themselves partly superimposed on each other and on the text boxes, a visual representation of the fragmented nature of what is being related and the nature of the exploited body, depict the abuse that is taking place in both the past and present. The speech box included in one of the frames, in which the abuser insults the women, only intensifies the manner in which what has happened is being played out once

more in the here and now. Finally, in the recent Colombian work *Los once*, the use of visually dense images, of quotes from historical testimonies blended with fictional narrative, and of animals to represent humans, intensifies the difficulty of unpacking past events, in this case the 1985 raid on the Palace of Justice in Bogotá by the guerrilla group M-19 and the subsequent confrontation with state forces during which, in addition to many being killed, several people were disappeared (Jiménez, Jiménez, and Cruz 2014).

Whether as memory processes that frame the past (whether fictional or not) to delve into the metanarrative processes of history telling and memory or as sites that provide the means to consume, debate, and work through the vagaries of history and memory, in both form and object comics remain privileged sites for memory in Latin America. Although comics have adopted different historical, aesthetic, thematic, or contextual strategies, they nonetheless form a key formal, cultural, and social space for memory practices and debates about approaches to the past.

DESCRIPTION OF CHAPTERS

The contributors to this volume consider this engagement with memories of the past in Latin America via comics. In chapter 1, Jorge L. Catalá Carrasco considers the Spanish-Cuban-American War (1898) revisited by the Cuban comic *La emboscada* (1982). The comic, by Ernesto Padrón and Orestes Suárez, is a metaphorical reconstruction, influenced by post-1959 historiography, which seeks to reclaim Cuban agency in the conflict. It serves as an example of Alison Landsberg's "prosthetic memory" (2004), allowing Cubans to apprehend a historical narrative with a more personal, deeply felt, memory of a past event with peculiar connotations for Cuban national consciousness. The comic provides a case study for Jan Assmann's concept of "cultural memory" (1995)—more precisely, its *concretion of identity* and its *capacity to reconstruct*—shedding light on how the inscription of a 1980s Cuban revolutionary discourse onto the 1898 Spanish-Cuban-American War, demonstrates the enduring nature of certain collective memories.

In chapter 2, Edoardo Balletta looks at two works by Argentina's most famous comics writer, Héctor G. Oesterheld, both written at a time when Oesterheld was working for the armed left-wing guerrilla organization Montoneros. Balletta highlights how *Latinoamérica y el imperialismo: 450 años de guerra* (drawn by Leopoldo Durañona) and *La guerra de los Antartes* (drawn by Gustavo Trigo) reappropriate the past to intervene in the present as a graphic, revolutionary act. Taking cultural memory to be socially

as reproducing the way spaces of urban poverty are reified as alien to the rest of the city; on the other hand, because the artwork is clearly a digitized rendition of the woodblock, it is also a reminder of the way technology and graphic techniques have participated in negotiations over modernity and its popular memories.

Overall, the chapters in this book exemplify the productive dialogue that can be established between the fields of comics and memory studies in the Latin American context. These contributions show that, because of their graphic form and because of the subjects that they address, comics in Latin America offer a unique and compelling perspective on memory that sheds new light on key historical and cultural processes in Latin America. Comics in Latin America have been rarely explored in terms of how Latin Americans remember, forget, and make sense of a wide range of issues—from the constitution of national identity, to narratives of resistance to colonialism and imperialism, to the construction of revolutionary traditions, to authoritarianism, political violence, and its traumatic legacies. In this sense, this volume should be read as a contribution not just to the fields of comics studies and memory studies but also, and more generally, to Latin American studies—a field that has explored both comics and memory but that has never offered a sustained reflection on the interplay between the two. While certainly not the last word on comics and memory in Latin America, this volume provides insights that others can draw on to examine further how comics can inform not just the study of memory but also other key issues at stake in Latin American studies.

NOTES

Epigraph: Moore and Bolland (2008 [1988]).

1. See *Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios Sobre la Historieta* (RLESH), online at https://archive.is/8eN5.
2. Earlier academic publications in the United States, such as the *Journal of Popular Culture* (first published in 1967) or *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture* (first published in 1982), have also included pieces about Latin American comics. In the United Kingdom three academic journals focusing on comics have been established: *European Comic Art* (since 2008), *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* (since 2010), and *Studies in Comics* (since 2010).

3. Some critics and artists (Masotta 1982 [1970]; Del Río 1983; McCloud 2004 [1993]; Merino 2003) take the discussion of the origins back to cave painting, the Trajan Column, or the Bayeux Tapestry—all seen as precursors of modern comics for the primitive sequential disposition of images, one of the main characteristics many scholars attribute to comics. In the Latin American context, the Codex Azcatitlan (1500s) and the *Nueva Crónica y Buen Gobierno* (1615) by Guamán Poma de Ayala are often cited as similar antecedents.
4. For the Peruvian case, see Ayala Calderón (2012).
5. Töppfer is considered the father of comic strips (Kunzle 2007). His *Histoire de M. Vieux Bois* was published in 1837. It was subsequently published in the United States in 1842 as *The Adventures of Obadiah Oldbuck*. For a detailed account of these artists' contributions to the development of early comics, see Smolderen 2009.
6. Outcault was the creator of the "The Yellow Kid," the lead comic strip character in *Hogan's Alley* that ran from 1895 to 1898 in Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World* and later William Randolph Hearst's *New York Journal*. U.S. scholarship on comics has tended to assume "The Yellow Kid" as the foundational moment of modern comics.
7. In 2007, Panini became the publisher of the Mônica conglomerate, using new projects, including a TV show, to diversify consumers by targeting adults as well as children (Vergueiro 2011: 144–45).
8. The *Bienal Internacional de Humorismo Gráfico* (which celebrated its eighteenth edition in March 2013), which highlights graphic humor and comics, is held annually at San Antonio de los Baños.
9. Rius's international success came with the 1976 English-language publication of *Marx for Beginners*, a translation of his *Marx para principiantes* (1972), following the first English edition in 1970 of *Cuba para principiantes*. *Marx for Beginners*, a comic strip representation of the life and ideas of Karl Marx, became an international best seller and kicked off the *For Beginners* series of books from Writers & Readers and later Icon Books.
10. On Acevedo's graphic adaptation of César Vallejo's *Paco Yunque*, see Faverón Patriau (2011).
11. Useful introductions to the field include Olick and Robbins (1998); Huyssen (2000); Klein (2000); and Kansteiner (2002).
12. More recently, the Holocaust memory discourse has been mobilized in the context of Argentine memory struggles as part of an attempt by some to frame the Argentine experience as a genocide. See Robben (2012).
13. On this point, see Sturken (2007) for the U.S. case.
14. The literature on this issue is far too large to cite here. See, however, Jelin (1994, 2003) and Stern (2006).

15. See Grandin (2005); the special issue of *Radical History Review* edited by Grandin and Klubock (2007); and Klep (2012). On Truth Commissions more broadly, see also Hayner (2002) and Payne (2008).
16. See Theidon (2012); and Riaño-Alcalá and Baines (2012).
17. See, among others, Meade (2001); Jelin and Langland (2003); Jelin (2007); Hite (2007); Gomez-Barris (2008); Hite and Collins (2009); Drinot (2009); Bell and Paolantonio (2009); Violi (2012); Milton (2011); Andermann (2012); and Hite (2012).
18. See, for example, Taylor (2003); Drinot (2011); Sosa and Serpente (2012); and Milton (2014).
19. Beyond Latin America, there are a vast number of examples of historical comic narratives. Some notable examples include Jason Lutes's saga *Berlin* (2001) or Vittorio Giardino's 1999–2008 account of the Spanish Civil War *¡No pasarán!* (published in 2011). Spain itself has seen a wealth of publications about the Civil War, including Francisco Gallardo Sarmiento and Miguel Gallardo's *Un largo silencio* (2012), Paco Roca's *Los surcos del azar* (2013), and Vicente Llobell Bisbal's *Un médico novato* (2013). The Ley de Memoria Histórica (Law of historical memory), passed by the socialist government in 2007, has created a context within which comics artists have created a diverse body of work that addresses the legacy of trauma in Spain (Merino and Tullis 2012: 224).
20. Joe Sacco's work, notably *Palestine* (2003), has many similarities with Spiegelman's testimonial approach in *Maus*.
21. Visual engagements with the process of storytelling itself are often even more prevalent in autobiographical comics and graphic novels, works sometimes described as "autographies" (Gardner 2008). This particular genre of memory is less prevalent in Latin America than it is in North America and Europe. Some examples from the latter regions include Craig Thompson's *Blankets*, which includes one frame that is erased on a simultaneously internal and metavisual level by a paint roller that is initially enclosed within a frame but then appears outside the frame, sweeping across the page to eventually leave a white emptiness (Thompson 2005: 540–43); Paco Roca's *Arrugas*, which uses half-drawn blurred faces (Roca 2013: 95) and then an entirely blank two-page "splash" (98–99) to represent the absent memories brought about by Alzheimer's disease; and Alison Bechdel's memoir *Fun Home*, which uses multiple narrative times, frames that function as historical documents (Bechdel 2006: 8, 32), and drawn pictures of photographs (71, 100–101), all of which blur visions of the past and intensify uncertainty over the veracity of memory.

PABLO ESCOBAR AND COLOMBIAN NARCOCULTURE

ALDONA BIALOWAS POBUTSKY

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pa' semilla (1990), translated as *Born to Die in Medellín*, and *Our Lady of the Assassins* (published in Spanish as *La virgen de los sicarios* in 1994, and translated into English by Paul Hammond), stirred interest and sparked academic discussions with their portrayal of an idiosyncratic world of young Medellín hitmen whose violent lives were molded and curtailed by the drug wars. Vallejo's *Our Lady* centered on fictional adolescent killers for hire, yet the occasional mention of a certain Don Pablo and a priest who participated in Don Pablo's surrender were clear references to Escobar's dealing with Father Rafael García Herreros, the founder of the television program *Minuto de Dios*. Salazar's *Born to Die in Medellín*, on the other hand, approached the *sicario* subculture from the ethnographic standpoint, as a local identity seeking definition against, but also in dialogue with, Western "hegemonic" cultures. Trapped in the peripheral and underdeveloped urban areas of developing states, Medellín's hitmen elevated their narco bosses to celebrity status because these individuals triumphed financially and thus could enjoy pleasures previously limited to the elites. Eager to follow this example, young toughs would trade their lives for a brief fling with a global consumerism that otherwise was out of reach—a pair of Nikes or a refrigerator as payment for a hit. Their hybrid subculture boasted a unique slang, peculiar death rites, and a whole set of bizarre values, where life—theirs and those of their victims—took the form of a commodity. Though written independently of Vallejo's novel, Salazar's work provided a rich sociocultural context to the fictional tale, proving that life affected by global drug trafficking can indeed be stranger than fiction. These were undoubtedly the most renowned early accounts devoted to the narco reality in Colombia.[10]

The following years saw a flurry of books, films, and academic research devoted to the narco world in general, while in the 2000s, narco-themed stories exploded in the sensationalist writing and outpouring of audiovisual production targeted to a broader public. Telenovelas, commonly understood as a showcase for bourgeois society that mitigates the unfulfilled material aspirations of its audience while endorsing extreme consumerism, found their perfect model in the narco nouveau riche, thereby taking the topic of drug trafficking into Latin America's prime time. Stories relating in some way to the drug trafficking world, the more intimate the better, have proven to be a sure-fire commercial success, often blossoming into a multifaceted merchandising campaign, where a feature film followed a book release and after that came a telenovela, as was the case with

Jorge Franco's 1999 *Rosario Tijeras*. There were also instances where a television series and its book version appeared simultaneously, as happened with the 2008 *El cartel de los sapos* and the 2009 *Las fantásticas* and *Las muñecas de la mafia*, all written by Andrés López López, an *ex-traficante* from the North Valley Cartel, whose photos by 2010 were appearing in the Miami society pages.

Television, the principal purveyor of popular culture, was hardly lagging in this rush to commercialize the trend. Narco telenovelas from *La viuda de la mafia* (2004), *Sin tetas no hay paraíso* (2006), *Cartel de los sapos* (2008), *El Capo* (2009), and *Las muñecas de la mafia* (2009 and 2018) to *Rosario Tijeras* (2010), *Correo de inocentes* (2012), *Escobar, el patrón del mal* (2012), *Alias el Mexicano* (2013), *La viuda negra* (2014), *Sin senos sí hay paraíso* (2016), *Bloque de Búsqueda* (2016), and *Alias J. J.* (2017) revisit the 1980s and 1990s to entertain with sex, violence, and an intense dramatization of the deterioration of Colombia's social fabric. Some argue that their purpose is to send a message to younger viewers on how crime never pays in the end. With the highest budget ever for a Colombian TV series, *Escobar, el patrón del mal* stood out from the rest of telenovelas. It weaved in documentary footage of the narco mayhem next to fictionalized encounters between real-life representatives of good and evil, thereby creating a national epic with Escobar as its main point of reference. With a script written by the descendants of two of Escobar's well-known victims, Guillermo Cano and Maruja Pachón, the series proposes to illustrate both sides of the conflict. Of course, writing about Escobar remains a risky endeavor; the very idea of a bandit appeals to the masses in how he defies the hierarchy of wealth and power, only to eventually exert influence and become part of the establishment (Hobsbawm 95). Another, even more obvious truth is that his cruel patrimony remains fresh in the minds of those who would rather erase him from the national memory altogether, thereby relegating the stigma of narco Colombia to oblivion.

Theorizing Narco

The sheer volume and variety of narco-themed products makes defining *narcocultura* a daunting task. Indeed, Hermann Herlinghaus notes that narco-narratives "stand for an array of interwoven phenomena whose increasing presence across the hemisphere seems to correspond to the difficulty in providing a general description of them" (51). The author points

out the key changes in the imaginary and epistemological approaches in narco-narratives from the 1970s on, where the self-intoxication of the (privileged) literary/artistic subject of yesteryear (Thomas De Quincey or Charles Baudelaire) gave way to an overwhelming sense of skepticism and weariness when it comes to living the effects of the drug-fueled economy. Granted, earlier texts originated in the Hemispheric North, while the post-1970s narco-narratives emerged predominantly from the Global South. The vantage point of the latter is a bitter reaction to the widely held belief that the Global North has simultaneously been practicing: an orgiastic drug consumption and a puritanical rejection of the same, as evinced in how the "War on Drugs" is waged. After all, as Herlinghaus points out, "globalization has not only to do with the unequal distribution of wealth and poverty but also of these psychopathological stimuli and repressants that serve the 'achievements' of Western civilization" (52). The notorious drug trade adversely pervades the politics and the relationship between the North and some Latin American nations, which not only live day-to-day narco violence but also carry the stigma of narco contaminator.

In an attempt to define *narcocultura* as a whole, one could view it broadly as a complex negotiation of drug trafficking throughout the world's topography, history, and narrative possibilities in literature, television, music, architecture, language, fashion, and varied social practices. As such, it is open to wide-ranging interpretations, whether anthropological, ethnographic, sociological, literary, or in the media. Of course, Colombia was, and is, not the only country to have witnessed *narcocultura*'s ascendance in the past thirty years; like the actual drug war and real trafficking networks that are its "raw material," *narcocultura* is fundamentally defined by transnationality: by the transgression of political, economic, linguistic, and cultural borders. Thus, when Herlinghaus writes that "narcotics . . . have moved to the center of ever accelerating consumerism and growing psychotropic saturation, without which contemporary lifestyles and cosmopolitan subject positions would be virtually unimaginable" (7) and aims to explain how the thematization of renunciation and excess necessarily links the West with its Other, the Global South, he turns not to Mexican or Colombian experiences, or even to American or German ones, but rather to "new, *transnational* epics of sobriety" (29, my emphasis).

Situated at the conjunction of crime and popular entertainment, *narcocultura* offers a highly variegated, stylized set of representations that

permit Colombian cultural consumers, much like cultural consumers anywhere else, to recognize and mediate their own experience. Aside from its acclaimed literary and cinematic triumphs, *narcocultura* also comprises a host of pop-cultural encounters with drug trafficking's dark patrimony, stories that diverge sharply from the dry economic, political, and sociological debates of academics and political elites. Indeed, *narcocultura* is obsessed with affording popular audiences insights into the "real lives" of kingpins and queenpins—such as Escobar himself and his predecessor, Griselda Blanco—and of various hitmen or family members who insist on their version of the "truth." No less central a topic are the infamous narcos' and narcas' many erstwhile liaisons, such as trophy lover Virginia Vallejo or Griselda Blanco's African American employee and boy toy, Charles Cosby. By analyzing these figures' media presence, we can trace the impact that narco best-sellers and real-life drug traffickers have had on pop iconography and explore how *narcocultura*, in its turn, has both served hegemonic ideologies and questioned official narratives.

Be they mass-market memoirs of Escobar's friends and family, biographies of other drug traffickers, narco telenovelas, best-selling fiction, and both mainstream and yellow-press journalism—each text considered in this book contributes differently to the evolution of *narcocultura*, adding its own generic, thematic, and allusive qualities even as they all clearly resist the narratorial modes of performing objectivity and maintaining critical distance from their subject matter. Indeed, the bulk of the material emphasizes storytelling over facts, incorporates voices typically excluded from the "serious" news, and panders to emotions, voicing controversies and struggles over historicity.

Commonly classified as "middlebrow" or "lowbrow" material, many of these accounts trade in "popular" mythology as opposed to "official" history, inviting the dismissal or scorn of the cultural elites. Accordingly, the bulk of the material discussed here has received little to no scholarly consideration. But it is precisely here, in this material—by contrast with academic treatises, professional histories, and literary pieces—that we will gain access to Colombians' (and other Latin Americans') most common site(s) of encounter with the drug wars and their cultural legacies. Sales figures are not everything, but the record-setting, eye-popping viewership numbers associated with the *Sin tetas no hay paraíso* and *Rosario Tijeras* franchises say something very concrete about the pervasiveness, even the omnipresence, of *narcocultura* in the lives of ordinary Colom-

bians. Farmer and urbanite, churchgoer and agnostic, day laborer and salaried professional—they inform themselves not with economists' white papers and historians' tomes but rather with popular fiction, true-crime monographs, newspapers, and portable electronic devices streaming the latest telenovela to thematize the narcos and their excesses. To exclude pulp fiction, gossip columns, narco autobiographies, telenovelas, or biodocumentaries from an analysis of this kind, or to present these as mutually unintelligible or discursively disconnected from one another, would be entirely to misunderstand the nature of narco-narrativity's self-constitution-in-progress. These nonacademic and nonliterary registers shed light on how drug trafficking altered the way many people live, think, behave, dress, and talk.

The preponderance of the "culture of consumption" within popular narco accounts—a factor that constitutes the core social fabric of neoliberal societies—invites a postmodern approach to the examination of the narco phenomenon. Likewise, the postmodern condition is reflected in the social and cultural pluralism of *narcocultura* and in how previously unheard voices of various participants or "visitors" of the drug world offer testimonies that then are picked up by the media and brought to life as "intimate" versions. Historically, the rise of mass-mediated consumerist popular culture in the 1960s and 1970s brought about societal and cultural transitions where the cultural hierarchies of the high and low, and the hegemonic and the local, were deemed artificially created and thus no longer operative. Instead, mixed cultural hybrids appeared in a networked, globally connected culture. Skepticism toward normative and authoritative official culture extended itself to metanarratives of history and national identity as accepted before World War II, where the idea of progress turned into a failed master narrative. Together with the loss of clear generic boundaries came fragmentation, intertextuality, pastiche, and nostalgic stylizations of the past, justified under the presumption that official history—the master narrative par excellence—was but one of many narratives, sanctioned by the powers of the day. Similarly, the accounts fleshed out in this book address the criminals' humanity, thus challenging the master narratives on Escobar and his ilk. They also explore the superficial *narcocultura* and its hyper reality, as it rejuvenates premodern myths and folklore in what appears to be the social need to feel a connection to a more meaningful and authentic past. They do away with the high/low categories, shoring up the subjective and the local while

never detaching fully from global trends. As Fredric Jameson states, "At the cultural level, globalization threatens the final extinction of local cultures, resuscitatable only in Disneyfied form, through the construction of artificial simulacra and the mere images of fantasized traditions and beliefs" ("Globalization"). Likewise, the narco lifestyle as seen in telenovelas reconstructs a bizarre amalgam of the premodern and the postmodern, of celebrated social bandits who proudly flaunt traditional beliefs and behaviors, all the while engaging in the rapacious consumption of people and objects.

Drug trafficking per se epitomizes multinational consumer capitalism, the latest stage of capitalism, as it expands around the globe and thus needs "a global cognitive mapping, on a social as well as spatial scale" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 54). Postmodernism is a consumerist culture, as is the narco subject. Yet rather than focus on the economic aspects delineated here by Jameson, I propose to employ the postmodern characteristics that emerged from history, sociology, and media studies. Three concepts of particular importance are Jean Baudrillard's emphasis on the image, Jean-François Lyotard's rejection of metanarratives, and Lyotard's concept of the commodification of knowledge, inasmuch as it is valued for its utility (Lyotard). The move toward *petit récits* in lieu of a single grand narrative legitimized the boom of narco memoirs. At the same time, Colombian narco telenovelas began to parade caricatures lost in hyperbolic consumption, thus bearing witness to how the relationship between individuals and their culture is increasingly shallow and artificial. Social relations in the narco milieu are mediated by a procession of simulacra that morphs into a daily series of commodity exchanges. This condition echoes Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality, of the reign of style over substance, and of the media's constant reproduction of symbols and images.

In the process of postmodern commodification, *narcocultura* blurs the distinctions between brutal drug lords and celebrity icons. It is therefore noteworthy to examine the texts through the prism of celebrity studies, particularly focusing on the "Criminal Celebrity" or the diffuse pseudo-fame of "notoriety" that ideally "concentrate[s] on the extratextual aspect of performance, all the 'surround' of the performer that sometimes is in vital response to whatever text is present but just as often is in tension with it, contradicts it, or ignores it" (Braudy 2). Since the greater part of the material examined here proclaims to give the readers an uncensored,

"off the record" insider perspective on the narco milieu, I will also incorporate tabloid studies, as they explore the symptomatic traces of the role of "the people" and their discredited popular tastes. Its readers become voyeurs to the spectacle of sensationalism, implicitly accepting that the focus on melodrama and mayhem may come at the expense of actual facts. Its subject matter, much like the matter of the tabloids defined by John Fiske, is the one "produced at the intersection between public and private life," where "its modality fluidity denies any stylistic difference between fiction and documentary, between news and entertainment" (48). It is associated with "trash taste," as it resists objectivity and critical distancing, blurring public and private life, fiction, and documentary (Glynn 7–9).

Furthermore, my interdisciplinary theoretical framework will engage cultural criminology, which prioritizes the biographical accounts of everyday life with more expansive and intimate descriptions in order to address the complexity of the story beyond the merely statistical. To this end, I also found useful the attention that New Historicists have paid to the nonacademic and nonliterary registers, as they argue that even the most seemingly trivial anecdotes can reveal the codes and strategies that govern society as a whole, because they reflect how elements of lived experience enter in cultural production—and how these in turn shape literary forms. My aim here is not to demote art or aestheticize an entire culture but to capture flows of emotive energies that illuminate cultural occurrences and narratives of everyday life. With this I agree with Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, who champion a broader scope of material:

> To wall off for aesthetic appreciation only a tiny portion of the expressive range of a culture is to diminish its individuality and to limit one's understanding even of that tiny portion, since its significance can be fully grasped only in relation to the other expressive possibilities with which it interacts and from which it differentiates itself. (13)

Finally, the subject of Escobar as a global cultural commodity goes beyond the areas of history, crime, and popular culture. To many people's horror, Escobar, whose life and persona are by now firmly anchored in not just Colombian but also universal consumer culture, has become a performer of a myth that can be sold and purchased—in short, a thriving brand. The treatment of identity as a brand is symptomatic of the influence of

neoliberal dynamics, which makes viewing the popularization of Escobar's image through marketing theory both relevant and illuminating. It sheds light on the contradictions and high emotional stakes embedded in the reception and propagation of Escobar's stories by exploring concepts such as neoliberal ethics based on entrepreneurship, cultural flattening across the globe, the monetization of culture, hip consumerism, the popularity of brands that denote rebellion and individuality, and the authenticity of brands firmly attached to locale, thus providing a "genuine" experience. Consumer culture production attaches and proliferates meanings based on patterns grown from consumption, and the expansion of free markets across the countries has broadened neoliberal influence in both culture and politics. The neoliberal economics of global distribution, flexible systems of production, and high competitiveness continuously shapes and modifies culture and social behavior, where unfettered free market forces provide a guide for how to live (Harvey 2). How this neoliberal economy has affected the popularity of Escobar's image across the globe, what it has done to Medellín, and what that city is doing to erase it can be elucidated by exploring the brand's coercive power to proliferate, to discipline selfhoods, and to sow meaning.

Viewing narco material through the prism of Pablo Escobar-ness affords a panoramic and intimate insight into Colombia's cultural and commercial encounter with drug trafficking, such as the construction of formulaic Escobar-related products. While it unveils what we could call "an ordinary life" and everyday practices within the narco milieu, it also probes tendencies in the construction of formulaic Escobar-related products and formulaic *narcocultura*. It explores Escobar's notoriety sign and the values it intersects, such as consumerism, the exacerbated masculinity and femininity embedded in narco gender relations, the spectacle of greed and excess, and the commercialization of violence. It bears emphasizing that, unlike other academic studies that approach the story of *narcocultura* either by drawing from renowned sources and "high" literature or by focusing on the ethical ramifications of drug wars on real-life people, this book reads a variety of popular registers surrounding Escobar and *narcocultura* in general, because these are precisely the sources—verifiable or contrived—that contribute to the construction, circulation, and instant recognition of Escobar's brand and Colombia's narco mythology. As Luis Alejandro Astorga Almaza notes, albeit on the subject of Mexican narcos, "the distance between real traffickers and their world and the symbolic

production that talks about them is so big, that there seems to be no other way, current and factual, than to refer to the subject via the discourse of myth, whose antipodes could be represented by legal discourse and narcocorridos" (12) [La distancia entre los traficantes reales y su mundo y la producción simbólica que habla de ellos es tan grande, que no parece haber otra forma, actual y factible, de referirse al tema sino de manera mitológica, cuyas antípodas estarían representadas por la codificación jurídica y los corridos de traficantes (my translation)].

This study draws upon both biographical and fictional sources to discuss the shifts from initial descriptions of narco fixtures to today's deluge of micronarratives, enhancements, and parodies, and it grounds them in a broader social and political context by integrating both archival research and narco pop from the mass market. It explores why, given that Escobar's tale has been told over and over, the public remains interested in seeing and reading more. This, I believe, is the story of *narcocultura* yet to be told. Always present at the background of this book is the premise that the Escobar in question is a social construct and that *how* he and his milieu are presented may be more interesting than *what* is being said. We learn how the culture industry produces and consumes violence on the screen, how it envisions sameness and the other, how it addresses the complexities of gender and sexuality, and how it retells narco history and the Escobar brand to new generations of consumers.

Pop art exposes the role of the image in reproducing capitalist culture, reducing identity and style to a hyper simulacrum without a stable or real referent. Likewise, narco media culture has grown precipitously to reveal the triumph of the spectacle of consumer society, with Escobar's image—and that of other real or fictitious drug lords by extension—frequently reduced to a stereotype. In part by sheer overexposure, Escobar has achieved a transnational consumer awareness and brand equity in a society dominated by a glut of visual images and global symbols. Brand as such is separable from the product or service narrowly viewed, in that it is a psychological entity with associations far outside the context of consumption. And it can appreciate without strategic direction, which in part is what happened with the historical figure of Escobar. Due to the persistent curiosity of the public when it comes to anything related to the Medellín capo, many cultural models were built from his formulae (more or less consciously) and modified to attract attention, in the process increasing his brand equity while simultaneously stepping away from

the complexity of the real-life figure. I thus choose to place my journey through Colombia's narco popular culture under the umbrella of what I call the Escobar brand. At times, the stories in question are separated from his historical persona and viewed as a commercial product, at times they delve into the history of Colombia's drug trafficking and Escobar's life, including its most private aspects. They appear to retrace history, attesting not to their authenticity but to the subjectivity of the histories retold and the power invested in each discourse.

From focusing on consumer products at first, branding came to engulf places (cities, nations), people, and knowledge itself. Brand is a repository not merely of functional characteristics but of meaning and value infused with symbolism that, when utilized strategically, increases the potential for the success of a given product. A brand, above all, is a good story told to the consumer and also by the consumer, involving a collective authorship of companies, sales agents, and cultural institutions. People remember stories better than facts because stories produce emotions, and emotions help sell "an experience" that takes us out of our ordinary lives. A brand story becomes perceived as truth when it is successfully incorporated into the everyday lives of consumers, when it taps into society's higher values, and when it becomes an important resource for social interaction (McEnally and de Chernatony; Bengtsson and Firat 375). In other words, while an effective brand relates to the individual consumer on a personal level, it also addresses collective needs, thereby connecting communities of individuals. Never wholly static, the brand also knows how to readapt to the rapidly evolving consumer base in order to regenerate and thus remain in circulation.

For many specialists in marketing, a thriving brand is a performer of a myth. Consistent with this theory, Margaret Mark and Carol Pearson's *The Hero and the Outlaw* offers a systematic approach to building brands through the power of archetypes. Destined as a manual for marketing professionals, the book aims at strengthening brand communication and the "understanding of the impact of brand meaning on consumer psychology and on the collective consciousness of our times" (46). I propose to use Mark and Pearson as a lens to view the resonance of Pablo Escobar and *narcocultura* in general, since the authors focus on the relationship between human passions (both good and bad), sales, and brand recognizability. The manual lays out how archetypes provide the intangible link between customer motivation and product sales because they speak

"directly to the deep psychic imprint with the consumer, sparking a sense of recognition and of meaning" (Mark and Pearson 14). Archetypes are the "'software' of the psyche" (32), always present in our lived experience of the world, universal to the core, but having a "valance" that changes with culture.

Studies of branding techniques frequently point out a recent shift: While in the past consumers wanted to belong and keep up with the crowd, today they strive to stand out (Gronlund 173). Mark and Pearson describe this change in terms of what they call "postmodern marketing," wherein old rules no longer hold. The new breed of consumer, skeptical of advertising hype, forgoes brand loyalty for independence and authenticity. Few if any sacred stories remain, due to the collapse of prior narrative truths, and the meaning that formerly lay in the group now is left for the individual to find. In short, "people are thrown back on their own devices" (Mark and Pearson 36). For literary critics, this is a marketing parallel of Lyotard's rejection of one grand narrative and the postmodern move toward swirling galaxies of *petit récits*.

In marketing, consumer distrust enhances the appeal of the Explorer archetype, who finds its narco counterpart in the figure of the Outlaw. The general pathway is similar; both Explorer and Outlaw principally seek freedom, but the Outlaw goes further by defying the status quo. The Outlaw acts as a disruptive force, moving to action and in the process violating cultural norms and rules. He thus uses the energy to mobilize in order to destroy. In terms of its effect on the customer, the Outlaw brand enjoys a conflicting and often highly controversial reputation that can "reinforce soulless, cynical behaviors when values are absent. But they can also . . . help open and ease social restrictions or serve as a safety valve that allows people to let off steam, thus protecting the status quo" (Mark and Pearson 127). In other words, on the positive side of the spectrum, the Outlaw can release society's pent-up passions, act as a catharsis to vent frustration, or siphon off oppressive behavior, for it "speaks to consumer's underlying fear . . . of allowing life to just happen to you—of being a victim or a wimp" (103). On the negative side, it is blamed for abetting sexism, violence, and antisocial behaviors (125). While the Explorer qualities correspond to the customers' fears of inner emptiness and entrapment, people drawn to the Outlaw express fear of becoming powerless, trivialized, and inconsequential.

Instructions on successful branding emphasize the importance of focusing on just one archetype as the defining characteristic of the product in order to reinforce familiarity and trust. Yet the primary archetype can be nuanced by other archetypes to broaden the target groups or address other aspects previously less in vogue. This is where the Escobar brand reveals its adaptability, in that the newer voices address different and more nuanced aspects of his story. The capo himself has morphed into a fragmented entity that represents different things to different people. In the official grand narrative of yesteryear, Escobar stood for—and rightly so—criminality, terrorism, and overall monstrousness. The *petit récits* emerging in the last two decades address his other facets as a fun-loving man (the archetypal Jester), a Lover, a daredevil (Explorer), protector of the poor and of his family (Caregiver, Hero), and a charismatic leader (Ruler). These nuances redress Escobar's notoriety and open up his subject to a broader target group. The entertainment factor should not be overlooked. Criminality, adventure, drama, and (ill-fated) romances generate a broad spectrum of entertainment products for today's public. Thus, in marketing terms, Escobar's shifting symbolism today reflects the dynamic readaptability of his brand.

In this book, I adopt a two-pronged approach to the Escobar brand, with the first section, "Performing Pablo," exploring the social discourses that address the capo directly, and the second, "Beyond Escobar," delving into the larger cultural phenomena influenced by his figure. The first three chapters focus on cases where the figure of Escobar, the proverbial Outlaw, is deconstructed either to contest his legend or, more frequently, to replace it with a counter-myth of Escobar as the classic Lover, Warrior, Caregiver, or Hero. Particular attention will be given to Escobar's family members and acquaintances who rearticulate his story in the media—often in a competing fashion—all the while inserting themselves into the ongoing debate on his private life and political alliances. Each such account attempts to negotiate the individual subject position of the storyteller, thus offering readers a more voyeuristic entry into the multifaceted and often opportunistic social and cultural alliances surrounding the capo's memory. The intimate take on the capo does not always serve individual interests, however, for the 2012 telenovela *Escobar, el patrón del mal* blends archival material with melodrama in order to topple his myth. Whether these efforts are successful is another matter, but nuancing