Canche Gringa 1-6 - Editors Report - Developmental Editing - BubbleCow

**Editor**: Gary Smailes

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## Understanding Your Feedback

Before I launch into more detailed feedback, I thought I’d review how the edit has been structured.

You will have downloaded two files:

1.    The edited manuscript.  
2.    The editor’s report.

The first is your original manuscript but now contains detailed editorial notes. This is a Word document and contains both comments and tracked changes. If you don’t use Word, don’t worry; most modern word processing packages have the ability to ‘read’ Word manuscripts. Alternatively, you can download this excellent word processing software for free - [LibreOffice](https://www.libreoffice.org/). If you are having problems seeing your feedback, just let us know.

Before you dive into the edit, I think it will help if you understand the ethos behind BubbleCow’s approach to providing feedback.

The approach is to provide clear and truthful feedback. If we see a problem, this will not only be highlighted. But at least one potential solution is provided. There are two types of feedback, those based on clear editorial best practices (e.g., showing, not telling) and those based on the editor's opinion. When a suggestion is based on opinion, it will be indicated. We see the edited manuscript's role in offering specific, actionable feedback on sentence/paragraph problems. You should be able to apply the suggestions made on a line-by-line basis without any real wider knowledge.

The role of the editor’s report is to provide a wider overview of the editing process. This means that if we have made changes to the manuscript that require a deeper rationale, these have been outlined and explained in the report.

One way to consider the two documents is to see the report as the wider instructions and the manuscript as the practical application. You should be able to start each editing session by reading the editor’s report before diving into the specific section of the manuscript.

### Using Tracked Changes

Tracked changes are like magic. Once they are turned on, they record everything that happens to your manuscript. You then can go in and ‘accept’ or ‘reject’ the changes as you see fit.

The way the tracked changes appear on your machine will vary depending on your machine and software setup. Typically, they will show the original text removed in red and the new text replacing it in black. However, depending on your settings, this will sometimes be the case. For example, in manuscripts requiring a large number of alterations, it is common for an editor to ‘turn off’ the original text and only show the changes.

If you are having problems seeing the tracked changes, the first place to look is your settings; the two important elements are: ‘simple markup’ and ‘all markup’. If using Word, I suggest you look in the ‘review’ section of the ribbon at the top of your manuscript and ensure that you have set the markup to ‘all markup’. This way, you can see all the possible changes.

The video below will give you a more in-depth view of tracked changes and comments: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AUf-IxzXyVk>

### Edited Manuscript

When you first open the edited manuscript, you may feel overwhelmed by the number of alterations. This is normal.

The manuscript contains my tracked changes and comments explaining the rationale behind these changes. In some cases, I’ve re-written passages or removed whole sections, but where I’ve done so, I’ve sought to explain my thinking using comments. Where possible, I have also highlighted sections I feel work well.

The real power of tracked changes is that if you disagree with the comment or change, you can just ‘reject’ what I’ve said and carry on.

Whenever I’ve identified a persistent problem, I’ve stopped explaining any future changes within the comments and have just made the change instead. Where this is the case, I have written an explanation for my rationale behind the changes in the editor’s report. You’ll need to read the comments I’ve left and review the changes, accepting or rejecting them as you see fit.

### Editor’s Report

The editor’s report should be read first and is designed to ease you into the editing process by providing an overview and explanation. The aim is for you to use the feedback in both the manuscript and this report as a means of formulating a plan to elevate your manuscript to the next level.

I’ve split the report into several sections...

#### Typographical and Stylistic Summary

You’ll find a summary of your book’s typographical and stylistic details, which lists things such as what form of English your book is written in, how you’re writing out times, whether you’re using the Oxford comma or not, etc. This section is useful as it collates information and is a future reference. It will also help you enforce a level of consistency in your book.

#### Strengths and Weaknesses

You’ll find pointers that will give you an overview of what I think are the manuscript’s key strengths and weaknesses. If they’re turning up here, they are some of the manuscript’s biggest and most persistent problems and will need addressing before any others. I explain the problem, how it is manifested in your book, and why it is a problem. I’ll also suggest at least one possible solution.

#### Chapter Feedback

This section contains feedback specific to each chapter. The depth and detail of this feedback will vary depending on the issues encountered. This feedback is designed to be actionable but should also be read in conjugated with more general feedback and embedded notes in your manuscript.

Please note: I’ve approached your book from the point of view of a new reader. This means that I may comment early on but then change my mind. This should give you a good indication of how a reader will be responding to the story and any confusion they may have. It should also help you to see my thinking process. Feedback has indicated that this can be very helpful for some authors.

#### Summary

Please remember that all the comments and changes come from a place of support, not criticism. I want to make the book the best it can be, as you do. I’m not here to cast judgment or project my own preferences. My role is to help nudge your writing style toward a place that will create the best possible reading experience.

Our goal is to produce better books and better writers.

Finally, once you delve into the feedback, I’d suggest you read the notes and then take a day or two to absorb what I’ve suggested. If you disagree with any changes, that’s fine, but please do take a little time to think them over before getting back to me. If, after this ‘cooling-off period’ you have any questions or comments, please don’t hesitate to email me at [gary@bubblecow.com](mailto:gary@bubblecow.com).

## Notes on the Edited Manuscript

Below is a list of general comments about your manuscript.

Please note that many of these changes have been made to help in the eBook conversion process. This process often involves using the original manuscript’s formatting to help ‘set’ the formatting of the eBook. However, this can be problematic. I have, therefore, made some changes to help negate any potential future issues.

* I’ve run a basic spelling and grammar check. I’ve carefully made the alterations I felt were needed. This is not a proofread but will add some level of consistency to your book.
* I have replaced double spaces with single spaces. This was to eliminate any unwanted ‘white space’, which is often removed during the eBook conversion process.
* I’ve set the line spacing to 1.5 lines. This helps with readability.
* I’ve added page breaks at the end of chapters. This will help with digital conversion.
* Ellipses have been formatted as … (dot dot dot), not . . . (dot space dot space dot space).
* I have removed exclamation marks, since these are often seen as a sign of weak writing and should be avoided where possible.

## Stylistic and Typographical Summary

Below is a list of changes that have been made to help with readability and add consistency.

### Language

American English

### Numeric Notation

Spell out whole numbers up to (and including) one hundred (e.g., zero, one, ten, ninety-six, 104). Spell out numbers that begin a sentence unless it begins with a year (e.g., "Twelve drummers," "The ten lords a-leaping," "2011's quota for off-season holiday references has been filled.").

Spell out ordinal numbers up to (and including) "hundredth" (e.g., second, sixty-first, 333rd, 1,024th).

If you're juggling a bunch of numbers within the same paragraph or series of paragraphs, be flexible with the number style if doing so will improve clarity and comprehension. For example, use one number style for items in one category and another style for another category: "I read four books with more than 400 pages, sixty books with more than 100 pages, and a hundred articles with less than 4 pages."

### Speech Marks

Double for direct, single for reported.

### Oxford Comma

Yes.

### Narrative Perspective

Third-person Limited.

### Tense

Present

## Strengths and Weaknesses

This section contains specific feedback about elements of your book that are immediately actionable. I have strived not only to explain any problems I have encountered but also to provide at least one solution you can apply to your book.

You novel stands out for its exceptional literary craftsmanship. The writing is not only well-crafted but also demonstrates a high level of skill and precision, which is evident throughout the narrative. The prose is polished, clear, and effectively conveys the themes and emotions integral to the story, making it a compelling read.

A noteworthy strength of the novel is the strong connection it establishes with its readers. This is achieved through a narrative voice that is both modern and contemporary, resonating well with today's audience. The voice of the novel is not just a conduit of the story; it also serves as a bridge between the characters' world and the reader, fostering a deeper understanding and empathy.

Furthermore, the deliberate and reflective 'voice' aligns perfectly with readers' expectations, enhancing their engagement with the story. This reflective quality invites readers to not only immerse themselves in the narrative but also to ponder and reflect on the underlying messages and themes. It's a voice that doesn't just tell a story but also invites introspection and connection, making a novel that not only entertains but also resonates on a deeper level.

While your novel demonstrates many strengths, there are areas that require attention to elevate the manuscript further.

Firstly, there is a need for a clearer establishment of the main character's hopes and dreams. The narrative currently lacks a distinct articulation of what happiness means for the protagonist, how she envisions achieving it, and the specific steps she feels are necessary to reach these goals. This clarity is crucial as it not only drives the narrative but also allows readers to connect more deeply with her journey. By explicitly defining these aspects, the story can gain a stronger sense of purpose and direction.

Secondly, the manuscript exhibits an overuse of adverbs. While adverbs can be useful, their excessive use can weaken the impact of the prose. It often leads to unnecessary verbosity and can detract from the strength of the verbs and adjectives. A more judicious use of adverbs, coupled with stronger and more precise word choices, can significantly enhance the readability and impact of your writing.

Lastly, there is a need to pay closer attention to the attribution in dialogue. Effective dialogue attribution is key to maintaining clarity and flow in conversations. In several instances, the attribution is either excessive or insufficiently clear, which can momentarily pull readers out of the narrative. Streamlining dialogue tags and ensuring they are used effectively will not only improve clarity but also enhance the overall reading experience.

### Establishing Hopes and Dreams

In "Canche Gringa," it is crucial to establish the hopes and dreams of the main character as early as possible. This foundational step sets the stage for the reader’s journey with the character, providing a clear sense of direction and purpose for the narrative. The goals and aspirations of the protagonist act as a guiding light for the story, illuminating their motivations, actions, and the overall trajectory of the plot.

#### Conveying Hopes and Dreams

* Through Dialogue: Characters often reveal their deepest desires and aspirations through conversations. Whether it's a heartfelt confession to a confidante, a heated argument expressing hidden dreams, or a reflective monologue, dialogue can be a powerful tool for unveiling the inner workings of your protagonist’s mind. It's important, however, to weave these revelations naturally into conversations to avoid exposition that feels forced or out of place.
* Through Actions: Actions often speak louder than words, and this is especially true in storytelling. How a character behaves in certain situations, the choices they make, and the paths they pursue can all subtly hint at or outright demonstrate their deepest desires and goals. Observing the protagonist’s actions allows the reader to infer what drives them, which can be more impactful than simply being told.

#### Clarifying Goals, Obstacles, and Stakes

* Goals: Clearly articulate what the protagonist is striving to achieve. This could be a personal ambition, a quest for something greater than themselves, or a journey of self-discovery. The key is to make this goal evident early in the story, providing a clear destination for the narrative journey.
* Obstacles: No journey is without its challenges. What stands in the way of the protagonist achieving their dream? These obstacles, whether internal, external, or a combination of both, add tension and conflict to the story, making the journey compelling.
* Stakes: What does failure mean for the character? Establishing high stakes - what the protagonist stands to lose if they don’t achieve their goal - heightens the emotional investment of the reader. The risk of loss or failure adds urgency and weight to the protagonist’s quest, driving the narrative forward.

#### The Result: A Sense of Movement and Purpose

By establishing the protagonist's hopes and dreams effectively, "Canche Gringa" will not only have a strong narrative drive but also create a deeper connection between the reader and the main character. It sets a clear path for the story, giving the reader something to root for and a reason to turn the page. This sense of movement and purpose is essential for maintaining engagement and investment in the story

### Adverb Usage in "Canche Gringa"

During my review of "Canche Gringa," I've noticed a frequent reliance on adverbs. While adverbs have their place in writing, their overuse can sometimes detract from the quality of your prose. In literary craftsmanship, adverbs are often regarded as a tool to be used sparingly. This is because they can be indicative of a tendency to 'tell' rather than 'show' in your writing.

#### Understanding 'Show, Don't Tell'

The principle of 'show, don't tell' is pivotal in effective storytelling. It suggests that instead of explaining actions or emotions directly (telling), you should allow readers to infer them through description, action, or dialogue (showing). For example, instead of writing "She angrily slammed the door," a more immersive approach would be "The door banged shut behind her, echoing her frustration through the hallway." The second sentence removes the adverb 'angrily' but conveys the emotion more vividly through action.

#### The Pitfalls of Adverbs

Adverbs, especially those ending in '-ly', can often act as a crutch, propping up weak verbs or adjectives. They may inadvertently signal to the reader that the verb or the adjective needs extra help to convey the intended meaning, which could hint at a lack of precision in word choice. For instance, "walked slowly" could be replaced with "ambled" or "sauntered," each providing a more specific image with fewer words.

#### Enhancing "Canche Gringa" by Minimizing Adverbs

In "Canche Gringa," consider revising sentences that rely heavily on adverbs. Look for opportunities to replace them with stronger, more descriptive verbs. This will not only tighten your prose but also enhance the reader's experience by creating more vivid and engaging scenes. For instance, if a sentence reads, "He spoke softly and reassuringly," consider "He whispered a reassurance," which conveys the same meaning but in a more direct and impactful way.

Remember, writing is an art form, and like any art, it thrives on nuance and subtlety. While it's not a rule to completely avoid adverbs, being more judicious in their use can significantly elevate the quality of your writing. By focusing on 'showing' rather than 'telling', "Canche Gringa" will allow readers to immerse themselves more deeply in the narrative, creating a more memorable and engaging reading experience.

### Attribution in Dialogue: Best Practices for "Canche Gringa"

In the context of your novel dialogue attribution plays a crucial role in clarifying who is speaking and how they are speaking. Simply put, attribution is the process of assigning a line of dialogue to a particular character, typically through tags like 'said' or 'asked'. For example, “I don’t agree,” John said. Here, 'said' is the attribution, linking the dialogue to John.

#### The Purpose and Usage

The primary purpose of attribution is to maintain clarity for the reader, ensuring they can easily follow conversations without confusion. It's also used to add context or emotional subtext to the dialogue, though this should be done sparingly to avoid over-explaining.

#### Best Practices in Attribution

* Simplicity is Key: Often, the best choice is the simplest one. Tags like 'said' and 'asked' are usually sufficient and unobtrusive. They allow the dialogue itself to take center stage without drawing attention to the tag.
* Avoid Overuse of Adverbs: Similar to the use of adverbs in general prose, be wary of overusing them in dialogue tags. For instance, “he said angrily” can often be shown through the dialogue and actions themselves.
* Show, Don’t Tell: Let the dialogue and actions of the characters convey their emotions and intentions, rather than relying heavily on attributions to do this job.

#### Dialogue Between Two Characters

In scenes where only two characters are conversing, it’s not always necessary to attribute every line of dialogue. Once it’s clear who is speaking initially, the back-and-forth exchange can often stand on its own without further attribution. This approach relies on the natural rhythm and flow of conversation.

For example:

“Are you sure about this?” asked Maria.  
“Absolutely,” replied John.  
“It seems risky.”  
“Sometimes, risk is necessary.”

In this exchange, after the initial attributions, it's clear that Maria and John are speaking alternately, eliminating the need for further tags.

Effective use of dialogue attribution in "Canche Gringa" will enhance the readability of your narrative and provide a smoother reading experience. By following these best practices, you can ensure that the focus remains on the characters’ words and actions, rather than on unnecessary narrative mechanics.

## Chapter Feedback

This section contains specific feedback about your chapters. This feedback is in addition to the Specific Feedback.

### Forward

I have added shorted paragraphs to this section to help increase readability and the impact of your words. This shorter paragraphs help draw in the reader and pull them onto the next chapter.

### Chapter 1

Looking at flowers. Kids at dinner. Fire and wine. Memory. Talks to husband. Storm.

* This chapter does well at setting the 'normal' for the main character. The reader is left with a clear understanding of their 'status quo'. It also establishes the 'reflective' nature of the main character.
* I would have liked to have seen the main character set out some goals and dreams. By implication, she is seeking happiness but it would have been good for her to have established what this looks like and what she feels she needs to do to get to that point in her life.

### Chapter 2

Thinking about taking a pill. Memory. Roommate and talk to sister. Meet Chad. Chase is at home.

* I love this chapter. It is well-written and very emotional. I still feel the analogy with the branch isn't working but that a small point.
* This chapter reads differently after the recent abortion law changes in the US. I am not sure you need to make alterations, but it does date the book pre-2023.
* When you enter the scene in the mall, include additional location description to allow the reader to picture the scene in their mind's eye.

### Chapter 3

Chase. Dating Chase. Worm dish. Drunken date.

* Start the chapter with a brief location description. This will allow the reader to ground themselves in the scene and adjust the image in their mind's eye. You don't need much since you have already described the scene. Focus on things that are different or Chase as he moves through the scene. E.g. Chase walked ahead of me, stepping carefully on the rug and navigating to the worn sofa.
* As with the previous chapter you need to pay attention to attribution, there's no need to add attribution to each sentence if it is clear who is speaking.
* There's a section in this chapter where you outline the relationship between the main character and Chase. This is important information but it should be reduced. The problem is that you are giving it via narrative summary and it si difficult to keep a reader engaged when you are feeding them information in this manner. See if you can cut this section down.

### Chapter 4

Playing guitar. Prepare for the trip. See flowers. Chat in bar. Plane. Go to house. Meet family.

* I really liked this chapter. You have a real gift for observational storytelling, deeply grounded in real life. It has a reflective quality that hooks the reader.

### Chapter 5

Wake. Breakfast. Bus. Meet friends. Book a hotel.

* I am seeing the same problem with attribution. You don't need to 'tag' every line of dialogue, its ok to on add attribution to avoid confusion.
* There's a moment where you mention them driving around town. I wanted you to layer in some location description. You don't need much but enough for them to get a feel for this new location, its culture and what it looks like.

### Chapter 6

Listen to band. Get changed. Meet with friends. Talk to Pablo. Go to beach. Meet Luis. Kiss.

* I have removed some of the unnecessary attribution. See my editor's note for more details.
* You need to make sure that you provide a better description of the beach scene. I was unable to picture this in my mind's eye and it was a little confusing. You need to make sure you clearly explain the location.