When Eduardo’s father came back to Guatemala after a spell in the United States, the tattoos up his arms gave away his roots in the *mara* (gang). Before long a rival gang had planted a knife in his back; when that failed to kill him they returned to finish him off in the street near his home. Eduardo (not his real name) was only eight at the time. But to avenge his father he joined his gang as a *sicario* (hitman), and killed his father’s murderer. Eduardo is now trying to find out whether life can offer any of the happiness he says he has never known. Since January he has been studying computing with La Ceiba, an NGO. As for that murder: “I enjoyed it,” he says blankly.