

5 The woman who walks naked through the streets of Santa María provokes
astonishment in the children, delight in the men, and incredulity and anger in the
women. She sits down at the corner of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and Sabino, next to
the bicycle repair shop. The children come out of the two adjacent slums and cross
the street to watch her as she sniffs glue from a bag, her only possession. She doesn't
10 seem to care that she's naked, yet neither could you say that she'd made a conscious
decision to display her dark, abundant flesh.

Even when she's sitting down you can tell she's a woman of vast stature. At shoulder
level, her hair is a mass of tangles that contains balls of chewing gum, bits of earth,
dust and fluff. The applause and whistles of the onlookers grow louder when she
opens her legs and begins to scratch herself hard in the most impenetrable part of her
15 being. At this point, the young men, who are always hanging around, can't suppress
their laughter. Instinctively, as if fearing that at any moment they too might reveal
their mysteries, they finger the flies of their trousers.

And when the woman lies down and turns her back on them, the onlookers begin
throwing things at her. She takes a while to react, but they all know that as soon as
20 she sits up, she'll get to her feet and chase her attackers. And the children will then be
able to see that her breasts are not, in fact, stuck fast to her ample abdomen. Some of
the smaller children go and tell their mothers that "the woman who wears no
underpants or anything" is on the loose again. And their mothers forbid them to go
back outside.

25 There was a period when she was seen by several women near where Aldama crosses
Mina. Then for two years she prowled up and down Avenida Guerrero. She would go
to sleep surrounded by a pile of clothes donated by well-meaning people, and which
served as both pillow and mattress. When she grew tired of her bundle of clothes, she
would burn it using the same solvent she inhaled.

30 The huge, dark woman goes into building sites to wash. The glee of the workers
reaches its height when she bends over to drink from the tap. They're beside
themselves with excitement when she picks up handfuls of lime and powders her
armpits. Any man bold enough to approach her has always been repelled by the
ferocity of her insults. The women who live around Calle Sor Juana complain not
35 about the exhibition she makes of herself but about the fact that she's freer than the
men. Instead of putting an end to the extravagant behavior of this woman—which

arouses lewd thoughts even in the most saintly of men—the police, they say, spend all their time arresting drunks.