

Afterwords

Gwen Pharis Ringwood

Now I am home from the conference of women writers of the Americas, North and South. My ears remember the sound of Spanish, French and English, spoken by women, old and young, sisters and daughters.

We swam in a sea of words, divested our clothing piece by piece. Slid beneath fronds of language, dived for pearls, felt images slide over skin, were caught in the toils of wordy proliferations, paused to delight in rainbows, nosed at dark shoals, aware of sharks and shocks. Barely escaped drowning in turgid waters.

We emerged to find mysterious lacerations, some spreading bruises on the surface of our prized encasements.

Emerged. Shook off shining droplets, picked off fern and flotsam, jewels of fish scale, combed algae and vestigial matter from hair that smelled of sea weed. Emerged to examine the encasement. . . to view with slight surprise divided thighs, two knees, two ankles, feet complete with toes in the requisite number. Had we shared some wordless memory of slipping through brine and sea weed with the slow roll

*Now, beached at home, I try to recall
how and where came these encroachments
on my tight-drawn skin. Whose pain
caused this cut? Whose impingement
this purpling bruise? What singing
in what tongue do I remember? And
from what throat came that cry? From
what beleaguered rock?*

*of fish or dolphins, felt the foam of
water stirred by the exultant thrash-
ing of . . . could it be a tail?*

