

Because the word is power, the word is magic, the word is sacred, and the word contains reality.

Another part of all of this is that English is so abused in terms of advertising jingles and sitcoms and just a multiplicity of media and words printed that the English language does not have the capacity to be sacred anymore, it's diluted. This is because it is so easy to lie in English, to say what you don't mean, which is not true in other languages. Some Native languages it's not possible to lie—it's simply not a concept, it does not exist. English feels to me like this very well organized way to lie, it seems that lying is its forte, lying and oppressing and telling people one thing and meaning another.

The whole issue of English being a conqueror language, and used to conquer people all over the globe, is very bizarre because if I had not been colonized and you had not been colonized, we would not know how to speak to each other so I can now make community with people that I would never have had an opportunity to have community with before as a result of this colonizer language. What you have then is something that seems like a gift but it has this terrible undertone with it, and it is rapidly becoming, I am afraid the only language spoken. It really frightens me how quickly languages are disappearing. There has been a renaissance in Native communities of trying to re-establish the power of language ... because language really does determine how we think, therefore how we act. I think language is far more powerful than western culture acknowledges, and English itself is in denial about the sacredness of the word. Just the fact that there are so few words to describe sacredness is a clue. I suppose actually that if your business in the world as a language is to participate in the conquering of other people then you can't be sacred because conquering other people is evil.

*This article is reprinted with permission from Angles: Vancouver's Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Magazine (September 1995, Volume 13, Number 9). Subscriptions may be obtained from 1170 Bute St., Vancouver, B.C., V6E 1Z6.*

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<sup>1</sup> This notion is informed by Elisabeth Grosz and Gayatri Spivak's discussion, "Criticism, Feminism and the Institution" in *Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews with Gayatri Spivak* (Ed. Sarah Harsym, New York: Routledge, 1990).

J.A. HAMILTON

## Epiphyte 2: Moss

When you wanted to know  
what I was preoccupied with  
in the dusk, I wasn't thinking  
I was facing the mirror  
lying against your right side  
while beyond the window  
the mountains rose like blue women

Seagulls tore the sky leaving indigo wake  
I was looking at the shape of your  
cheekbone high on your face, and at your  
thin arm. There was the sound of spring

We'd seen a dozen city  
hummingbirds in our garden  
and I remembered the hover of  
their ruby throats. And you  
wrapped in our red towels. It was  
mother's day; we had risen  
and fallen like landscapes on our bed

I watched your breast which was fuller than  
the night on my porch when I first undid  
your buttons. The sheet beneath you was  
green  
It was almost our anniversary

I was naked. You wore  
blue jeans still clasped. Your  
nipple pointed down like a tear  
drop, and I remembered how  
after you came, you prayed that  
I would never leave you  
and then I never left

*J.A. Hamilton is the author of a children's book, Jessica's Elevator, two poetry books, Body Rain and Steam-Cleaning Love, and a volume of short fiction, July Nights. Body Rain was short-listed for the Pat Lowther Award. July Nights was short-listed for the VanCity Award and the Ethel Wilson Fiction Award in the bc Book Prizes.*