

## Wayde Compton / THREE POEMS

### PILLAR

"The Negro's tale is a poignant one and it will never be told in full. Most of the first people who immigrated to Salt Spring wished to forget their past. Here they found the freedom they had never known in their own land. Their descendants, who live on Salt Spring Island today, concur in their forebear's preference. They wisely do not want to look back."

— Bea Hamilton, *Salt Spring Island* (1969)

up the I, suckers, reach  
for the sky. cause this is a hold  
up, and I  
've finally come  
for what's mine:

“The first settlers of Salt Spring Island were Negroes and came as early as 1857 (9?), seeking liberty and freedom from discrimination. Family names of these earliest settlers were

[Buckner Robinson  
Curtis Isaac  
Davis Wall  
Whims  
Levi Jones  
Shore Lester  
Robertson Thompson].”

— Richard Mouat Toynbee, *Snapshots of Early Salt Spring* (1969)

Howard Estes (bought himself with \$ from California gold  
prospectin), and his wife  
Hannah Estes, and their son  
Jackson Estes, and their daughter . . .

Sylvia Estes  
+ Louis Stark  
Sylvia Stark

Sylvia Stark  
X Louis Stark  
Willis Stark

“Panthers and wolves in those days swarmed on the island and prevented any attempt at keeping cattle or sheep. One man [Willis] relates how he and his father [Louis] shot nine panthers between them within a few weeks one autumn, and the howling of wolves was a constant source of disturbance at nights.”

— Reverend E.F. Wilson, *Salt Spring Island* (1895)

now.

don't be looking fo no black folks there

now.

ain't even *one* there, at press.

all moved to Victoria. Vancouver. the States. wherever. what you expect from people  
got names like “Whims”?

## RED LIGHT BLUES

it's the colour  
they tell you *no* in, in

voking blood perhaps or  
fire to keep you, a pack,  
at bay. English don't

exist in the cross  
walk. here we speak  
in pictographs, glyphs, i  
cons. X

for tracks that cut you  
off from other  
sides.

the hand offends me.  
the white man eternally gives the go a  
head. the hand  
that clasps  
your sullen undoing  
is read.

you could wait a thousand years,  
a glacier's day,  
for the dotted lines  
to sign your right  
of way. the right passage  
of entrance in  
to the right terrain.

when your destination  
is the crossing,  
how do you know  
when you've made it? we,

the strays of the race, the wild  
goose chasers, after

rainbows and caul  
drons of response  
and arrival,

allegedly  
shelved  
on the beams  
of the aurora  
borealis.

## SPORT OF THE KING OF KINGS

how to read the program:

—horse colour  
——sex  
——age  
——place foaled  
——name of sire  
——name of dam  
——name of sire of dam

abbrev. & symbols:

race information:

be—broken equipment  
acc—accident  
p—placed by judges  
I—intersected  
©—boxed in  
†—hopped  
bl—bled  
ch—choked  
χ—broke stride

race distance:

m—one mile  
n—9/16 mile  
s—1 1/16 mile  
h—1/2 mile dash  
f—5/8 mile dashed  
hy—1/2 mile hyphenated  
q—1/4 mile quadronated  
- —back to Africa  
+—to the crossroads

horse exegesis:

B—bay	c—colt
Blk—black	f—filly
C—chestnut	g—gelding
Hy—high yellow	h—horse
R—roan	m—mare
W—white	r—ridgling
X—negro	s—spayed
Ω—pale	t—crossed

who got the copyright  
on the King James thing?

alphabetized mind,  
omega nigga.  
alphabetized, mined  
down to a chiastic claim.

X

marks the stain  
of Cain of Cain of Cain  
but who got the copyright  
on the King James thang?

rhyme me up a river  
or a name. me? a lame-  
horse better, at the wicket  
staking claims.

ripping up washed up  
tickets to easy street. tripping  
steps on brassy sand. picking  
through the pro  
gram for a hint  
like an ibis  
on the hunt  
for in  
sects, for  
another day.

beak  
in the banks.  
beak  
in the beach breaks.  
skanking on  
the moon's off  
beats. like Bob



Marley with the mic

in his palm like

the sword of the righteous, swingin, ““until

the

phil

osophy which holds one race superior and another

inferior is finally and permanently discredited

and

aband

oned,

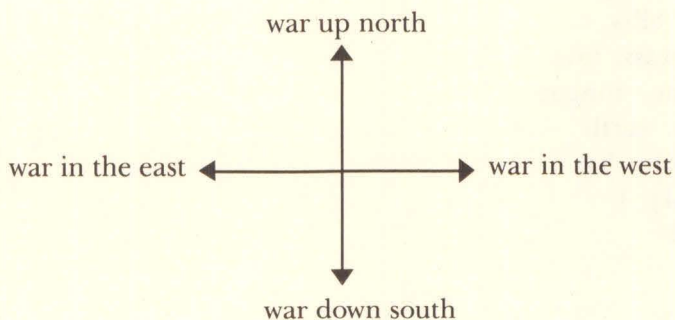
every

where

is

war

...



war  
war  
rumours of  
war.””

(who got the copy-  
right?) Marley fights

them down

down with the sword of his mouth  
mouth  
and his tongue of fire. fire  
of eye. eye  
of dread. dread  
of tendril. on  
high. high  
on. bliss  
of brass. fire  
come. tongue  
fire. earth  
of kiln. lap  
of sky. I  
and  
I

sometimes feel  
like a motherless tongue

berthed  
tied  
as noosed as Judas  
sold down the river of time.

still

I sharpen my spear like a cue  
and break, tidal. blacks  
(they say)  
are good at pool:  
something to do  
with ancient Egyptian  
or Islamic geometry?  
the divinity of math, the afro  
centric, concentric like  
360°  
like a clock  
like a track  
like a poem?

or maybe just something to do

with rolling and gathering  
no moss  
rolling and gathering  
no Moses  
rolling along

collecting no lichen  
rolling along  
like Hendrix covering Dylan  
likening —

“ “how does it *feel*  
to be on your own

[home

land]?” ”

someday my ship will come in  
someday our shining black prince will come  
numbers running  
to the end, and up  
ending diadems, in  
a black beret, blasting off,  
offing cops, bucking rounds,  
bucking down contending clowns  
on the march like Mao, cool like Mo  
manifesting, ‘how ya like me now?’  
all on the long long shot to pay off, down  
to back  
the exact  
mount.

sages of the race  
track  
leaf through pages of the pro  
gram  
like selectors in a dancehall.  
stylin like Solomon.  
“I like such-and-such,” and  
“so-and-so looks good in the seventh.”  
one of the wisest of the wise  
looking comely  
scrutinizes  
the racing form.  
his fighting chances  
these choices.

THE SUN DOWNS  
December 31, 1999

7TH RACE

Warm-up Cloth—blue      Purse—you

Blue BLANK EPOCHS

1      W g 6 (East) Pox Vopuli—HBC Rainbow—Blanket Statement

Blue KNIGHTVISION

2      C c 2 (West) Infrared—Pale Rider—Clint Westwood

Blue GRAVE FORECAST

3      Blk h 4 (North) Caste O' Thousands—Flash Flood—100%  
Chance Of Rein

Blue STONE HARVEST

4      ( Ω 6 (South) Baron Samedi—Grim Reaper—Conqueror

(All others scratched in the final race.)