

## At the Graveside of Henry Wilson (1891-1955)

Wilson, old black sheep  
we share this bond  
I, the fellow '*murungu*' who righted  
the cracked plastic vase  
toppled amid the granite chips  
that mound your bones

I, the stranger who brought a single  
plastic rose (mud-spattered)  
borrowed from the once hidden  
grave, now clematis-curled  
amid the grassy African corner—  
the grave over which your 'coloured'  
grandchildren come to kneel

Despite the Capricorn glare  
I feel a chill here, Wilson  
wondering what drew you  
half a century ago  
from the Calvinist drear of Aberdeen  
to the plump arms of a bush-wife  
in Southern Rhodesia  
twenty-three years your junior

One of your daughters, Wilson,  
this morning recalled  
that you were "fascinated with nature"  
that you would drop biscuits  
on termite mounds just to watch  
the crumbs carried off

Old black sheep, I wish you could know  
that in hollowing a place  
for your fallen vase  
I dislodged a nest of scorpions  
from which one female, bulged with eggs  
shiny-black and with pincers throbbing  
stood her ground

Wilson, old comrade—  
rest well that you are not alone

(*Fort Victoria Cemetery, Masvingo, Zimbabwe, December 26, 1987*)

