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Epitaph / Of Oak and Innocence

Lynn Riggs

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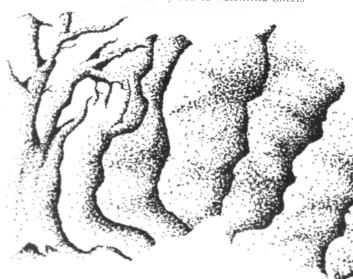


Epitaph

By Lynn Riggs

Here lies a bag of bones——here lies my love
Here I lie too, who never meant to die
at last unloved, and face ignominy——
for such it is for such as I, by love.
Immutably the standard flown above
splits in the wind, announcing the poor guy,
unrewarded by the wizardry
that love is. Immured is he who strove,
past all disclaimer, by his love and me
for bliss that follows after——bliss, my eye!
Is this a thought to take you when you die?
Is this the sentiment to put on stone——
a granite coverlet of sympathy
to wrap yourself in, when you lie alone?

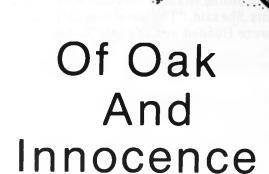
Illustration by Maria Valentina Sheets



LYNN RIGGS, like his Claremore predecessor Will Rogers, was part-Cherokee. Long deceased, Riggs was best known for GREEN GROW THE LILACS, which became the Rodgers-Hammerstein hit OKLA-HOMA! The Riggs poems published here are from his collection titled THIS BOOK, THIS HILL, THESE PEOPLE

Poems provided by Lynn Riggs' biographer—

—Phyllis Cole Braunlich of Tulsa



With wry contortions poets turn and seek that lyric moment to be precious in:

"The frigid bird claws with his granite beak,"

"O murderous ash! O grace of terrapin!"

We must go backward to a timeless wood of soft-dropping light and green moss underfoot, and sit in the sun that idles where we stood centuries ago and long: back to the root of oak and innocence—back to the year when the young sun soaked the amazing earth and crashed through fibrous stem and stone to be wombed in the darkest cell of soil and tree—when the simplest leafy motion was a birth, and the quiet word a thundering in the ear.