BOJIE

Wayne Billings*

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Abstract

Bojie hung one lean brown leg over His wharf, letting the toes dip up to the heel In the dark water beside the piling...
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Bojie hung one lean brown leg over
His wharf, letting the toes dip up to the heel
In the dark water beside the piling.
The brown fingers and ocher-pink palm
Strummed the steel strings, he singing:
   Nobody knows the trouble I’ve seen;
   Nobody knows the sorrow . . .
And his other foot — his leg crossed
Under him — beat the time in lanquid flash of ocher-pink,
Having no wharf, I squatted on the sandy
Clay by the thin-barked trunk of a cedar
Where melancholy indigo gathered
Imperceptibly, at my feet, round Bojie’s feet;
And his singing spent itself upon the water.
There were two turtles next the bank on a mud-caked
Willow root knobbing up out of low water, stretching
Their sun-baked necks out over low water, wry wrinkled
Heads snub-nosed into a red sun. A somberness lengthened
Out of the willow-thickets across the green backwater,
Catching Bojie’s twanging, mellowing it with distance,
Improvising from the moist dark pool
Where mule-deer drink. And you came and bent down
(The turtles slid singly into the shadows — cloop, cloop)
So that I could smell the damp, warm breast;
And I said, Bring out the plates, Lindy,
We’ll have supper here. But strange, I was not hungry.

— Wayne Billings, Ex. ’58