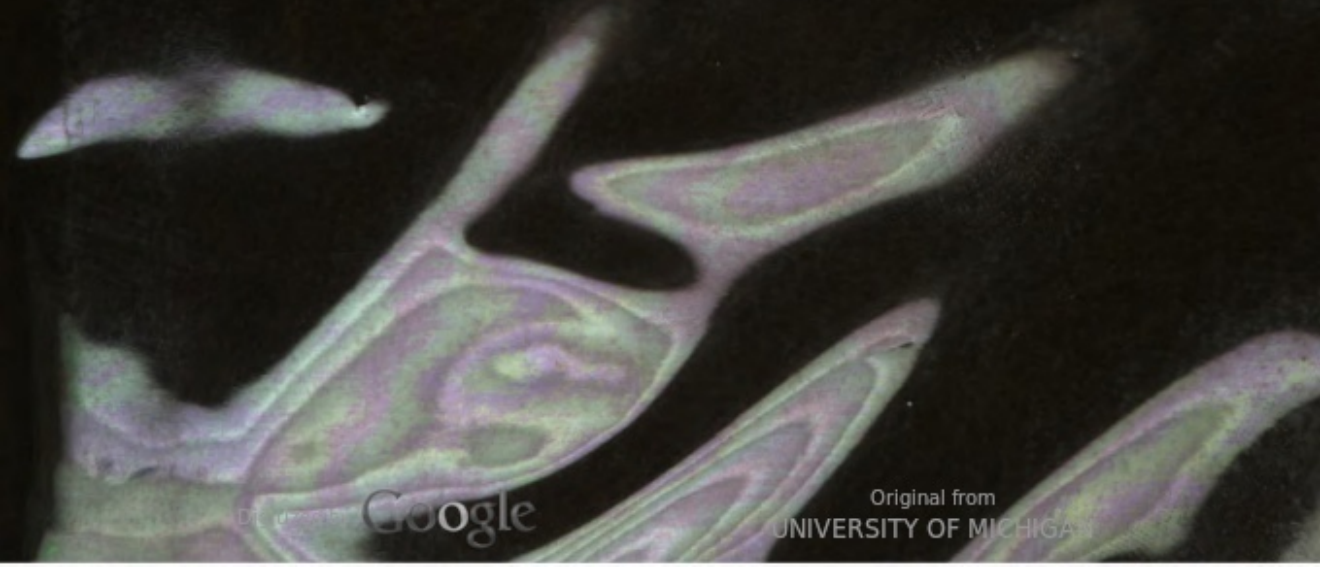
"Night Song" handles a much maligned subject in a remarkably truthful way. Williams brings a painful rage and deep sympathy to the study of the life and death of a jazz musician.

—James Baldwin

NIGHT SONG

a novel by

JOHN A WILLIAMS



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$3.50

NIGHT SONG

A Novel by JOHN A. WILLIAMS

th *Night Song* a new American Negro
ter enters the world of literature.
e Richie Stokes the Eagle—famous
ophonist, one of the book's central
racters, and a landmark in the world
jazz—John Williams has lifted his voice in a sustained lyric that raises the language of New York's jazz underworld to the level of art and poetry. He writes about "a world of cool, of arrogant musicians and worrying night club owners, a world filled with admirers, detractors, tourists, hipsters, squares, policemen, and weirdies, a world in which the days were really nights because you lived mostly in the dark and sang your song of life then."

In this world the author develops the dramas of Keel and his white girl [illegible] of Richie Stokes the Eagle [illegible] stoned and left for dead—of [illegible] the white man who hopes [illegible] of the world of his [illegible] passions of lust, [illegible]

(*continued on back flap*)

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"Take good care of him."

"We will. Don't worry. If we can't straighten him out, he can't be straightened."

Hillary and Keel went up the steps, Eagle dragging between them. "This mother sure is heavy when he's out," Keel muttered as they struggled up the flights with him. "All this ought to make you sober, man," he puffed.

Hillary, in fact, had reached a degree of soberness. The sight of Candy, her face—and perhaps her body too—sleek as a shark's so that one was bludgeoned with the fact that there was something odd about her, had helped; the understanding that Eagle was dying helped also, and finally the frenzied necessity of staving off that death had worn away the fuzziness in Hillary's mind. Now he was more exhausted than drunk.

They placed Eagle on the bed. "Open his clothes," Keel commanded. "Get his chest exposed." He went into the kitchen and returned with a handful of ice cubes. "Got to shock this cat back," he muttered, and he placed the cubes on Eagle's chest above the heart and slid them around.

Nothing happened. "Slap the mother," Keel said.

Hillary understood the purpose of hitting Eagle, but he hesitated. "Go on," Keel said softly. "It has to be done. Got to shock this mother all the way back home, man. We don't want to lose him. Go on, hit him."

Hillary swung. Not hard enough. He knew without Keel telling him. He swung again and watched for a reaction. "Try again," Keel said. Keel grunted when there was no reaction from the next blow either. "Get me some more ice," he said.

Day had come, Hillary observed on his way to the kitchen. Life was jamming through the streets; kids were on their way to school, workers were heading for their offices. Cars and busses had piled up, horns blaring. But

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(*continued from front flap*)

passion and despair are vividly and honestly confronted in this stark, lyrical drama. With this book, John A. Williams joins such writers as Philip Roth, Ralph Ellison, Clellon Holmes, and Nelson Algren in creating art out of the conflict of nationalities, races and cultures in the United States of America today.

JOHN A. WILLIAMS grew up in Syracuse in upstate New York. He attended public school in Syracuse and after war service with the Navy continued his education on the G.I. Bill. He was an undergraduate at Syracuse University (1946-50) and a graduate student (1950-51). His work has appeared in many avant-garde magazines.

Jacket design by Janet Halpern

R, STRAUS AND CUDAHY
Square West New York 3

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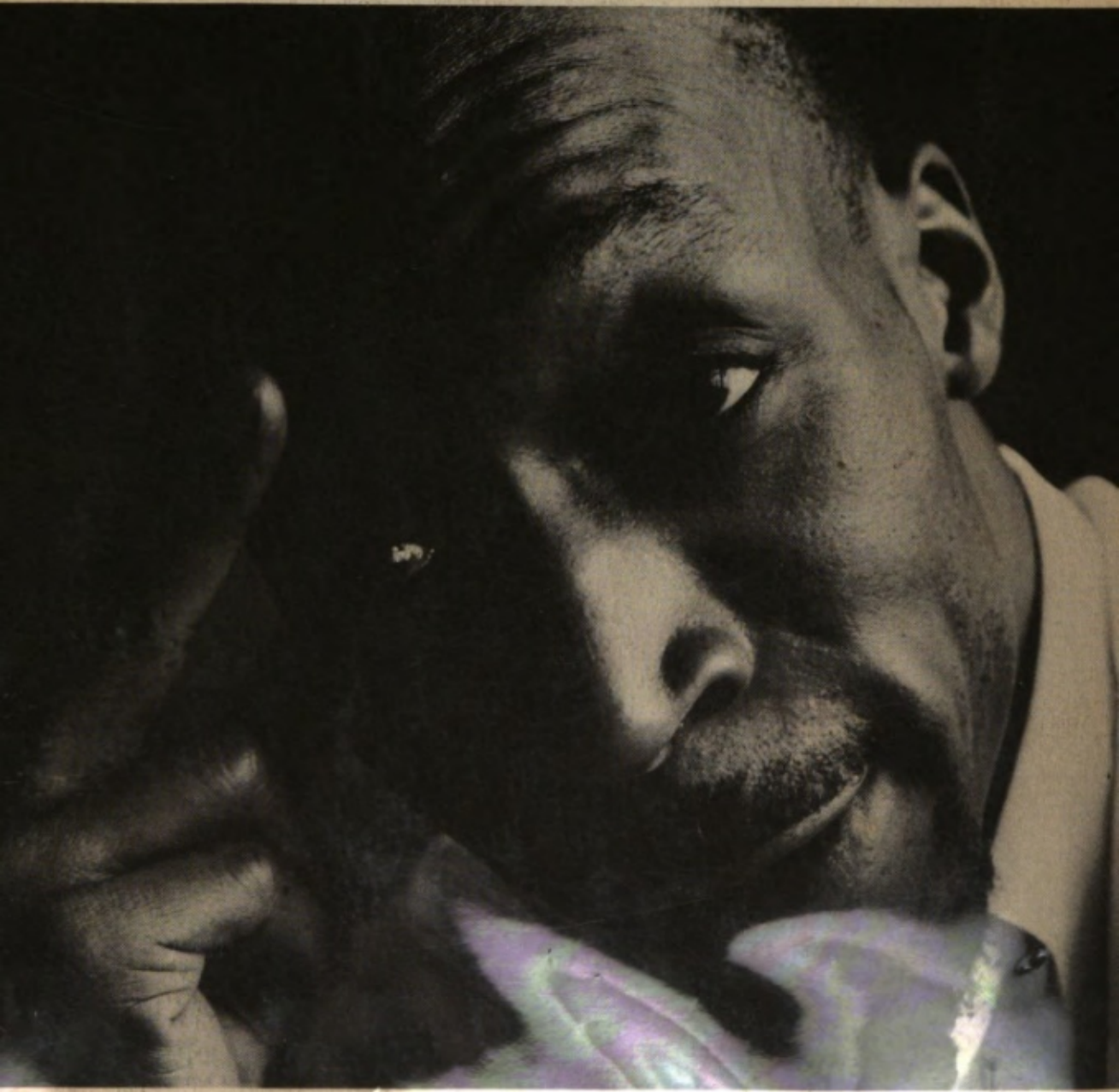
JOHN A. WILLIAMS



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