

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE TELEVISION
TECHNIQUES IN THE PRODUCTION
OF STUDY IN COLOR

THESIS FOR THE DEGREE OF M. A.
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ABSTRACT



This thesis deals with the interpretation by the director of Study in Color in producing the play on television.

The first chapter presents an interpretation and analysis of the script by the author and the values in the drama that he chose to emphasize in the television presentation.

Chapter II deals with the conditions of production including such consideration as the studio used, the inherent limitations of the medium, casting, budget and finally with the television techniques employed by the author to communicate the essence of those dramatic values arrived at in Chapter I.

The third chapter presents a shot-by-shot representation of the television play through the use of a photograph of each shot, the portion of script relevant to that shot and the author's reasons for the framing, camera angle and transition used.

Chapter IV summarizes the specific application of the general rules of television production as they were applied specifically in this production of Study In Color.

The appendices include reproductions of the set design, a floor plan and the director's marked copy of the script.

A kinescope recording of the production, which is an integral part of this thesis, is on file with the Television and Radio Department, Michigan State University.

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IN THE PRODUCTION OF STUDY IN COLOR

By

Robert Sherwood

A THESIS

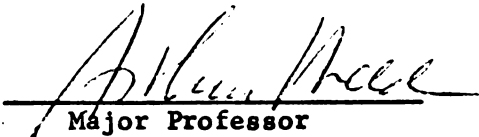
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MASTER OF ARTS

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670250

PREFACE

This study was undertaken to provide a first-hand account of one director's application of several general rules or conventions of television production to one particular production. The production was an adaptation of the play Study In Color and in this thesis the author, who was the producer-director, sets forth his approach to the play, details the shots taken and the transitions employed from shot to shot.

The purpose of this study is to provide a source for the student director to examine the results of a television director's work in the light of that director's stated intentions on a shot-by-shot basis.

An integral part of this thesis is a kinescope recording of the production of Study In Color which is on file in the Television and Radio Department, Michigan State University.

The author is grateful to Father Malcolm Boyd, author of Study In Color, for permission to produce his play for television and for permission to reproduce the play in this thesis. The author also wishes to thank all those who participated in this production of Study In Color and the writing of this thesis, particularly Arthur Weld, the author's major advisor.

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CHAPTER I

INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE SCRIPT

The television director requires many things before he is in a position to communicate with an audience. Cameras, of course, and lights, microphones, a crew, sets and props, but most important he requires program content, a reason to turn on the cameras and microphones, a subject to interpret for the medium.

The subject in this case was the script for Study In Color. The script was written in 1962 by The Reverend Malcolm Boyd, an Episcopalian Priest, and at that time Chaplain at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan.

Script Synopsis

Study In Color is a two-character play in the tradition of Absurd Theatre. It opens with both characters on stage but oblivious of each other. One character, played by a negro actor, is dressed in white and wears a white mask; the other character, played by a caucasian actor, is dressed in black and wears a black mask.

The play begins with a series of alternating soliloquies by the characters, each preoccupied with his state of color and the relationship of color and color-descriptive words to attitudes of good and evil, grace and sin, race and humanness.

The white character begins by lamenting that he is bored with color yet wishes he had some rather than being washed out, pallid and ... dull. The black character begins his series of speeches by wishing whites could understand what it is to be colored and decries

their stupidity in escaping the reality of it and their lame excuses for avoiding interracial confrontation on a social level.

White then turns to comparing the sounds of the words "nigger" and "negro," wonders what it is like to be negro and then proceeds to recite a litany of color-loaded phrases such as "black cloud" and "black night" and "black sin" carrying it ultimately to the human body from black face to white teeth.

Black then goes into his own litany of color-loaded words emphasizing "white" and its association with cleanliness and purity.

The soliloquies continue with White reciting the joke about God arriving by spaceship: "She was negro." Black continues the color litany, and finally both of the characters decide to be "colored" and thereupon don brightly colored masks over their respective black and white masks.

Now for the first time the characters are aware of each other and engage in dialogue. White tries to make polite conversation but is rebuffed by Black. After a few moments of silence Black thinks better of it and apologizes, offers White a cigarette which, afraid to accept such a thing from a "colored" man, he refuses for its being without a filter.

The conversation then turns to their "color" and the disguised White in a self-conscious display of his "tolerance" recites some of the typical white platitudes about race relations and human understanding, forgetting for the moment he too is "colored." The disguised Black confronts him with his "coloredness" and in embarrassed confusion White admits his "color" is a

mask he can remove at will and expresses his sympathy for Black because he cannot do so. At this point Black removes his mask explaining, "I'm not colored; I'm black."

White finds this confusing (it does not fit the stereotype) and finally asks why Black did not wear a white mask; after all, it is a white culture and it is easier to be white. Black's testiness on the subject leads White to declare heatedly, "You're so darned conscious of being a nigger ...," almost choking on his words after realizing what he has said. He continues to accuse Black of holding misconceptions and judging everyone on the basis of a few ignorant or prejudiced people. Black, weary and hurt, apologizes. Then White does the same.

At this point White suggests that they change roles for a few minutes. Black agrees and at the climax of a primitive dance that symbolizes birth and life, their masks are exchanged.

Now, White, wearing the black mask, is touchy and defensive. Black, wearing the white mask, finds himself foolishly trying to explain how the suburban "point system" works in real estate, his confusion turns to embarrassment, and as he goes into the cliché lines, "I don't know what we're going to do about this race business. I think it's getting worse all the time ...," the lights fade and his voice rises, becomes artificial, almost hysterical, as he repeats, "Anybody can see you're negro and I'm white." Abruptly the voice stops, the lights come up and Black is back behind his own mask and White behind his.

Interpretation

Father Boyd regards Study In Color as "an attempt to see two human beings -- two persons underneath masks, and the foolishness of stereotypes and prejudices and all the rest of it."¹

This author regarded the play as a significant and well formed statement, an absurd statement perhaps, about an absurd aspect of the human condition. In analyzing the script we find two stereotypes -- almost super-stereotypes -- living in the same world but apart, ignorant of each other. The opening speeches of each set the tone of their character and the direction of the drama.

The negro actor wears a white mask made to suggest negro features and a white actor wears a black mask modeled on stylized white features. The "race" of the actors is thus obvoluted. The lines of White tell us he is "bored with color" yet he is pre-occupied with it. In wanting "color" he is considering only rainbow hues and while he characterizes his "white" condition as "washed-out and pallid," it is also "antiseptically clean" -- a concept we may owe to soap advertising. With it all, however, he finds it dull.

When he turns to the consideration of non-white humanness he dismisses the rainbow colors. In fact he seems not to consider color at all but rather words, more precisely, labels. A contrast of the sound of "nigger" and "negro" speaks for itself. His wondering what it feels like to be negro devolves into "black" cliches -- black ivory, black velvet, black cloud, etc. The most

¹Interview with Malcolm Boyd at Detroit, Michigan, March 20, 1964.

loaded of the cliches is "black sin" which (along with the references to the parts of the body and the earlier reference to "nigger") is picked up in the following speech by Black:

"I dislike the name Nigger. I dislike the name Nigger. Cleanse my sins and I shall be whiter than white. Wash me in the blood of the lamb, and I shall be white, wash me in the blood of the lamb, and I shall be white. My blackness is hot, my blackness is hot, send a white angel so I can be cool under its wings, cool under its cool wings."

This speech is an indictment of our white culture, our white religion that has assigned to the role of the good guy a white hat and to the bad guy a black one. Sins are to be cleansed -- clean is good. Antiseptically clean is white. Blackness is hot, so is hell; and what is cool? A white angel, of course, the scourge of sin and hell and a non-white devil.

White then tells his joke, an old joke to be sure, but in his stark self-confrontation at the end he sees the joke is, in fact, on himself.

Father Boyd regards his plays as "preparatio evangelica, you might say, preparation for gospel,"² and there is a conscious imitation of church litany here. In fact, at this point, the lines are intoned by Black in a cross between Gregorian chant and a singing commercial. Continuing the analogy to a religious service, those first lines are our "opening sentences," an invitation to the worship.

²Ibid.

To further depict the absurdity of "color" as any essential criterion of knowing a man, that is to say in truth "cataloguing" him, they each put on a second multi-colored mask.

If they ever really get close to seeing each other it is during this period when they are both "colored." During this time they exchange words but in spite of their new masks they still know themselves only as what they were without the second mask. The "white" actor dominates the dialogue still mouthing platitudes and fatuous epithets. White is still guilt-ridden, Black is still mistrustful.

Plot

Such plot as may be found in this work consists of the eventual recognition by each character of the other, their attempts to communicate -- on the basis of their own preconceptions -- each one with the other and their ultimate failure. As stereotypes themselves they can only recognize each other as a stereotype and proceed from there. They often speak in platitudes and cliches to each other and so fail to communicate in any real sense. This lack of communication and understanding is the key to the entire work.

Father Boyd has said in regard to this play, "a lot of people look at Jewishness or Christianness or Hinduness, Whiteness or Blackness or Yellowness ... and they say 'ah I understand this guy,' but they don't understand anything except their own prejudice, their own ignorance, and the way they stereotype everybody out of their own need and fear."³

³Ibid.

Character

The characters do not grow; they change, or seem to, but the stereotype of the mask remains the same. At the end, they are what they were in the beginning, prisoners in separate worlds, hidden behind masks.

Even the metamorphosis, the one real attempt to see the other side, results in seeing only one side again and so fails. In the ritual analogy used earlier, this part of the play can be considered the communion. A spiritual rebirth for each character and yet nothing changes. The negro actor, now in the black mask, reads Muhammad Speaks rather than the more "middle class" magazine Ebony used earlier by the white actor in the same mask. This is not an indication of an intensification or reaction in attitude. It serves rather to underline the sort of "packaged" attitudes that go with our masks. The white mask, now on the white actor, is as fatuous as before and again the characters fail to reach each other.

The climax of the play, as the "white mask" repeats metal-lically, maddeningly, "Anyone can see you're black and I'm white," only to have the masks once more reversed, brings home the truth that, as people, we are not black or white, but only prisoners behind our several masks and alone.

Setting

There is no time or place in Study In Color; it takes place everywhere, anywhere, all the time, anytime. It is a limbo world but still "our" world; it is here and now.

To emphasize this universality the set was designed as abstract patterns and shapes but hung in such a way as to present a

closed or bounded world. No attempt was made to represent a "place" in anyone's real experience but rather to suggest a modern dream (perhaps nightmare) landscape with room for the principal characters, the dancers and the musician to perform the roles assigned to them by the author.

Masks

The actors, in a tradition as old as theater itself, are wearing masks. The origin of the mask in theater goes back, in fact, to the pre-theater ceremonies of primitive religious ritual. The mask has long served a useful purpose in drama from the Greek and Roman drama, the Japanese Noh drama and Kabuki Theater to Genet's The Blacks. It was at once a means for an actor to play two or more roles and an indication of the character's age, sex, mood and position.

In Study In Color, Black and White are not real people, they are not even given names, but we know them. In fact, they are us. Yet they are more than us. White especially is not believable as a "person." He is his mask and his mask is an irony in itself. Stark, unrelieved, chalk white, it is made with a broad flat nose, a juxtaposition of a feature commonly regarded as negro on the white face. The black mask, on the other hand, has a thin aquiline nose to provide idealized "white" features for the black character. These masks were designed and executed for the original stage presentation of Study In Color by Father Boyd and Mr. King.

So, in Study In Color, these masks convey blackness and whiteness, but they convey these qualities with the features deliberately confused. In their section on the *commedia dell'arte*,

MacGowan & Melnitz, referring to the practice of comedians appearing masked, point out: "Since so many of the scenes in the *com-media dell'arte* depended on pantomime, it seems strange that the comedians should have sacrificed the mobile expressiveness of their faces. The masks, however, permitted stylized exaggeration of features appropriate to the characters."⁴ So here we have the "appropriate" features exaggerated.

Summary

From foregoing the following values appeared to the author as those to be emphasized in the television production: The isolation of the individual, his separateness from his fellow man, the lack of understanding and communication resulting from the use of stereotypes as means of knowing or understanding other people, the universal character of these conditions of human existence and the hopelessness of retreating behind our own stereotype "masks" for any solution to the problem of prejudice.

⁴Kenneth MacGowan and William Melnitz, The Living Stage (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1955), p. 108.

CHAPTER II

THE CONDITIONS OF PRODUCTION

This chapter is concerned with those elements that governed the decisions made in producing the play Study In Color for television: such things as the studio, the inherent limitations of television, casting, budget, color, and the techniques of television production.

The Studio

This production was mounted for television in Studio "A" of WMBS(TV), the television station of Michigan State University, in East Lansing, Michigan, in February, 1964. The studio held a set approximately twenty-eight feet wide and thirty-four feet deep, which was designed by Jack Dunlevy, the staff artist and designer for WMSB. The play was written for one setting and was so executed for television. The set consisted of six panels of heavy gauge plastic netting decorated with various shapes, such as squares, rectangles and triangles, which were painted in contrasting shades of color (see Appendix A).

The Limitations of Television

The first limitation of television as a medium for dramatic expression is, of course, its fixed viewing format in which, no matter how large the screen, the image is always three units high by four units wide. In this production this inherent limitation is, in fact, an asset. It is at once an aid to confining the characters and action to a fixed, immutable, yet unreal, world.

Three cameras were used for the production. All were RCA type TK-11 studio cameras, with lens turrets and a standard lens complement of one 50mm lens, one 90mm lens and one 135mm lens each. Two cameras were mounted on Houston Fearless counterweighted studio pedestals. These cameras each had, as a fourth lens, an eight and a half inch telephoto lens. The third camera was mounted on a high hat fixed on a Mole-Richardson studio microphone boom dolly, adapted to this use by WMSB engineers. This camera had as a fourth lens a thirteen inch telephoto lens. All three cameras were monochrome type, image orthicon television cameras.

Three RCA BK 5 type microphones were used for audio. All three were fixed in place. One was used to pick up the drums and the other two were hung from booms fixed to the lighting grid and aimed to cover the limited acting area.

Casting

The choice of Malcolm Boyd and Woodie King Jr. as the actors was part of the author's original decision to produce the play for television. Malcolm Boyd had written the play and he and Mr. King had been appearing together in it, off and on, for over a year, under all sorts of conditions ranging from church basements and coffee houses to fully equipped college theatres. The play was a very personal thing to them and the author felt that they brought something to it that would be very difficult, if not impossible, to instill in any other actors available to work without pay in the Lansing area.

The drummer, Ted Small, was chosen because of his interest in and affinity for the project. He was the drummer for the Michigan State Band and was recommended to the author on that basis when

he sought a musician for the production through the Michigan State University Music Department. Mr. Small composed the drum solo that is the theme music and basis for the dance.

The choreographer, Sharon Cardwell, was recommended to the author by a teacher of modern dance at Michigan State University, Jean Gal. Mrs. Cardwell, a primary school teacher in East Lansing, Michigan, was immediately attracted to the play and the challenge of scoring the dance that symbolized the change of identity or re-birth of the principal characters. She chose the other two dancers, Gloria Davis and Clintona Robinson, on the basis of previous professional association with them and first hand knowledge of their ability as dancers.

Budget

One important consideration, mentioned briefly above, in casting this program was that those chosen be willing to appear without pay. There was no cash budget for this production. The entire television crew, including the author, worked on their own time. The television station, WMSB, provided the studio equipment and video tape as well as their available resources in property and materials for the setting. The author and his wife provided transportation, food, and lodging for the principals, Malcolm Boyd and Woodie King Jr.

Television Techniques

Study In Color presents an immediate problem for monochrome television because of the need to indicate color. The designer approached this problem by using many shades of grey in the set pieces. Variety was added to these by changing the lighting from

time to time. To emphasize the "colors" of the second masks used by the actors, contrasting shades of grey were used in stripes on one mask and polka dots on the other.

Directing a dramatic work for television presents unique problems and requires some understanding of the values of the various pictures and angles available and the use of transitions from picture to picture.

The conventions of television transitions demand that a cut, or instantaneous change in picture, be used when going from one camera to another when the action is continuous in time. The dissolve from one shot to another should ordinarily be used only to indicate a lapse of time and/or change of place. The most valid acceptable exception to this use of the dissolve is in the realm of fantasy and it is on this basis that the dissolve is used in Study In Color -- not to show a lapse of time but rather an absence of time in any relevant sense (see for example the transition from Shot 2 to Shot 3 in Chapter III, page 23).

The essence of television is the close-up: the ability to show real things and real people in great size on a small screen. The size of the television screen and its composition of five hundred and twenty-five lines preclude showing any great amount of detail in a long shot. The long shot is used often in Study In Color, however, to emphasize the smallness of the characters, their isolation from each other and from the rest of the world (symbolized here by the shadowy figures of the dancers in the background). In this case it can be effective because it is not necessary to perceive small details to feel the message of the picture.

In this same context the high angle shot, made possible by placing the camera on the microphone boom dolly, is used to make the characters seem smaller, less significant and occasionally to emphasize humility.

The low angle shot, which in the extreme can make a person or object seem huge and powerful, is employed here most often to underline the stereotype of the white character, present him as larger than life, and at times threatening. In this same respect I most often chose to put White in the foreground of two-shots and therefore have him appear larger and more threatening than the black character. To dominate the screen is to dominate all other elements within the shot.

Lighting changes are used to emphasize some of the impressions to be communicated. The actors are lit separately in the beginning; in the wide shot this underlines their separateness and makes them appear more isolated than the few feet between them would allow if it were evenly lit. When the don colored masks and become aware of each other the lights on the background are brought up to bring them together and emphasize their new awareness.

During the transformation scene the main characters go into darkness, a kind of visual returning to a dramatic womb for the spiritual rebirth to come. Spot lights come up on the dance area as the dancers come to life and move in and out of the light in primitive, ritualistic movement; now white, now grey, now black, and back through the whole spectrum again and again to the constant, basic pulse beat of the drums. The sequence is seen partly through one of the mesh screens of the background to point up the mystery of the dance, to suggest hidden meanings, hidden fears; and the

camera then trucks the screen out of its shot symbolic of a lifting of the veil, revealing it for what it is, a dance in celebration of life, new life, and new hope.

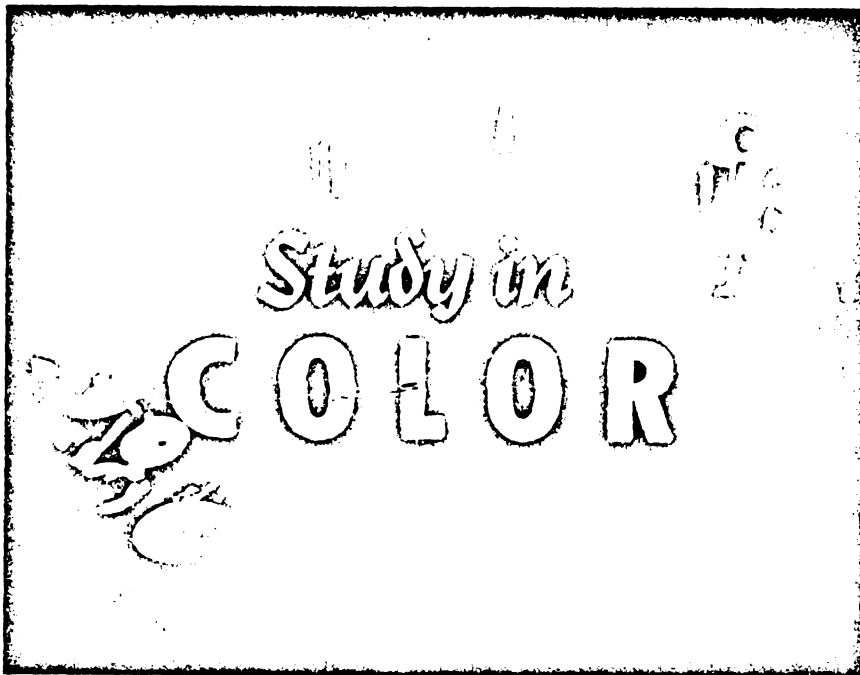
The new hope is unrealized in the ensuing dialogue between the characters; and again the lights go down, the characters go once more into darkness, the drums pick up the beat of the repeated lines of the actor, and the dancers descend like gods to return the actors to their original roles. The lights come back on as they were in the opening, the characters are again apart, alone, isolated and imprisoned behind their own masks.

CHAPTER III

DESCRIPTION OF TECHNIQUES EMPLOYED

This chapter presents a shot-by-shot representation of the television production of Study In Color.⁵ Each shot is accompanied by that part of the script relevant to it and by the author's rationale for choosing the particular transition, framing of content and camera angle. A complete, marked copy of the script used by the author for this production is included as Appendix C to this thesis.

⁵Study In Color, Copyright 1962 by Malcolm Boyd. All Rights reserved. No portion of this play may be reproduced in any form without permission.



SHOT 1

FADE IN

SCRIPT

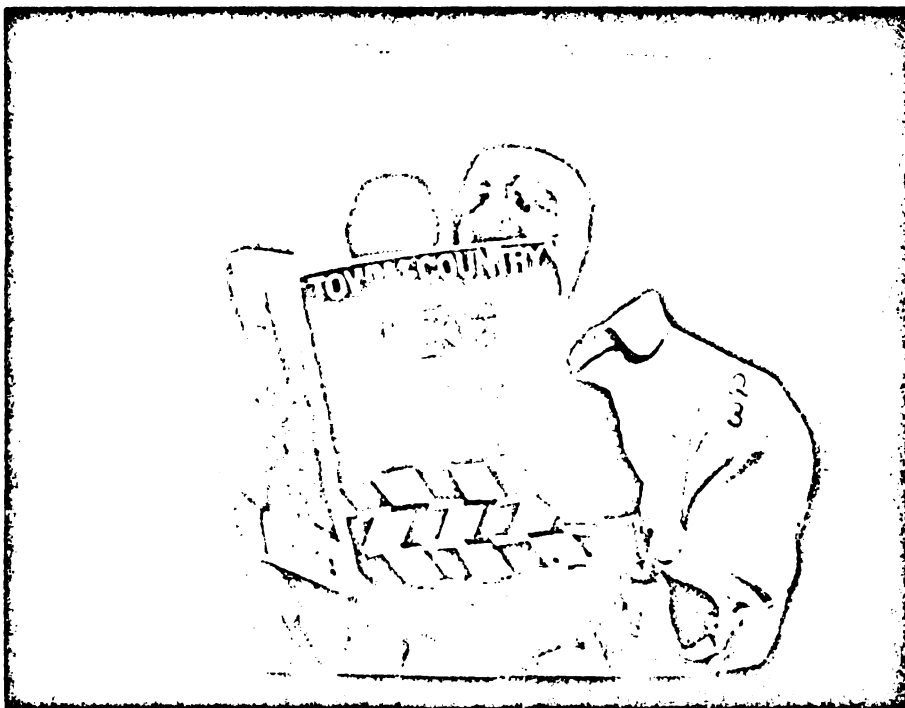
BLACK SCREEN, SOUND OF DRUMS SETTING A PRIMITIVE RHYTHM AS LENS IS RACKED INTO PROPER POSITION REVEALING ENTIRE SET. DRUMMER IS IN LOWER LEFT FOREGROUND, THE TWO ACTORS ARE MID-SCREEN BUT IN DARKNESS AND THE THREE DANCERS ARE STANDING 'FROZEN' IN THE BACKGROUND. SUPER TITLE CRAWL; STUDY IN COLOR, BY MALCOLM BOYD, WITH MALCOLM BOYD AND WOODIE KING JR. AS LAST TITLE FADES OUT LIGHTS FADE UP ON THE ACTORS.

DISSOLVE TO

RATIONALE

The opening shot is a "rack-in" of a 50mm lens, prefocused on the entire set. Only the perimeter of the set is lit, but a range of greys, necessary for a well shaded picture, exists because of lights on the vari-colored panels of the background. This also provides a dark area center frame to super the titles over.

The shot is high and wide.. After the opening credits fade out the lights come up and the set environment is established without cutting. We see the main characters seated on similar stools in the same set yet separated, alone, each unaware of the other's existence.



SHOT 2

SCRIPT

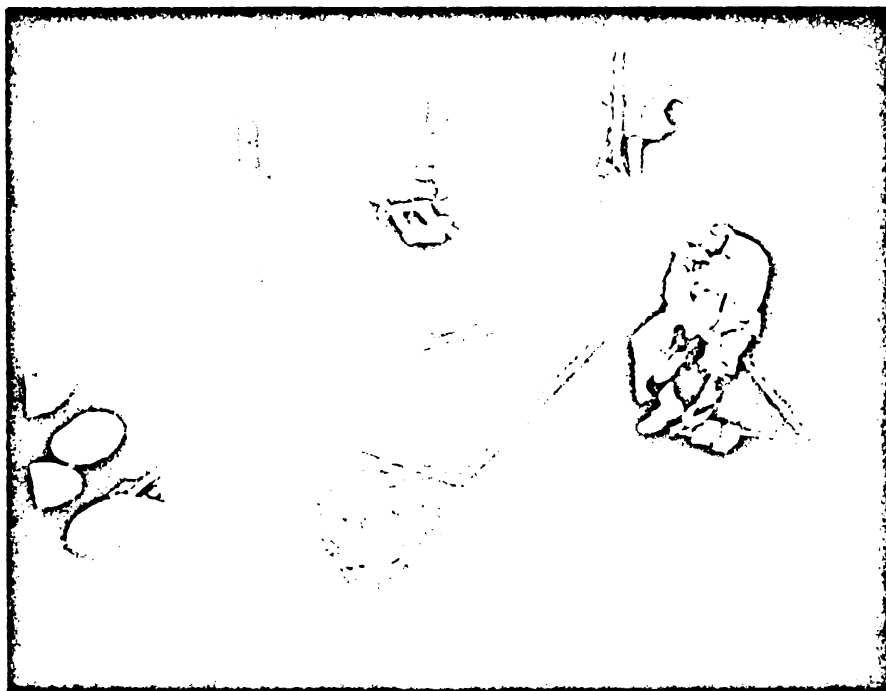
WHITE

I become so bored with color. (PAUSE) As a matter of fact, I wish I had some. (YAWNS AND STRETCHES) All of this race jazz. (LEAFS THROUGH PAGES OF MAGAZINE ... BORED ...) I mean, what is color? Well, you know, on a human being? Is it like being a painting, is it something like being a painting all the time, you know, like walking around like a painting among a lot of non-paintings? What is a non-painting? It's so complex, it's hard to talk about intelligently. I'm sorry, I know there isn't any such thing as a non-painting, but ... I become so bored, so bored. With just being white. I want some color. Actually, as they say, most of the world will be colored. Color is so beautiful, isn't it? Red, Yellow, Blue. And I'm just white all the time. Washed out. Pale. Pallid, antiseptically clean. Dull. It's so damn boring.

DISSOLVE TO

RATIONALE

A medium shot of White close enough to establish the white mask (with its 'typical' negroid features) and the magazine he is reading. The shot remains rather fixed, objective, to establish his relationship to the set for his initial lines on "color." At this point in the play there are no "action" lines. In the background are the dark figures of the dancers, the rest of the world; he is oblivious of them and they of him.



SHOT 3

SCRIPT

(HE SLUMPS IN HIS CHAIR, BROODING, STILL HOLDING HIS MAGAZINE. THE LIGHTS COME UP ON BLACK: HE TOO IS LEAFING THROUGH A MAGAZINE.)

DISSOLVE TO

RATIONALE

The dissolve is used as a transition to add an unreal quality to the situation, to add to the fantasy feeling of the setting, the lines and the masked actors. The return to the high, wide shot is to establish, to reset the situation in the viewer's mind, the isolation of the characters and their position in this unreal world.



SHOT 4

SCRIPT

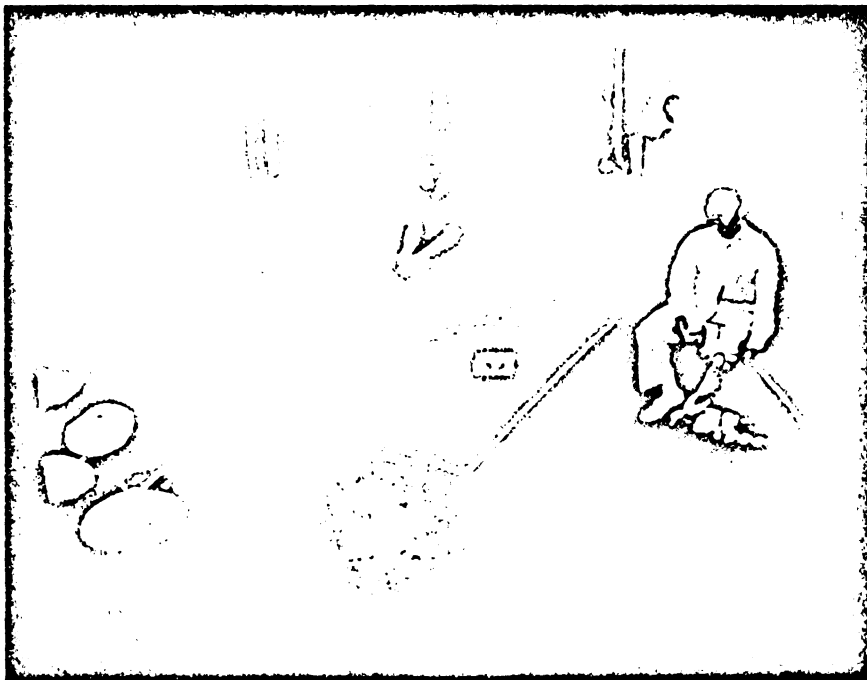
BLACK

I wish that just one white man could understand ... just once ... how a negro feels, what goes through a negro's mind. A white man is stupid when it comes to negroes. Like the white woman who called up to ask about the Booker T. Washington who lives out on Boston Boulevard. Like the white woman who has just put up a 'for sale' sign in her yard and she happens to run into the negro woman who has moved in next door, and she tells her, "My dear, you know my husband has a heart condition and we're going to have to move ... right away ... because we've got to move from this two-story house into a one-story house... immediately ... in another part of town ... Man.

DISSOLVE TO

RATIONALE

Using the dissolve again to Black's face with its black mask maintains the out-of-time feeling of the sequence. The shot itself, like the previous shot of White, is close enough to see the features of the mask and fixed, as impersonal as the lines to underline his introspection. And, in the background, again the shadowy figures of the dancers.



SHOT 5

SCRIPT

(BLACK SLUMPS IN HIS CHAIR IN DISCOURAGEMENT AND THOUGHT AS WHITE TOSSES HIS MAGAZINE TO THE FLOOR AND SITS UP AS THOUGH WITH A NEW IDEA.)

. DISSOLVE TO

RATIONALE

This dissolve is in keeping with the established mood to this point. It keeps the pattern of the shots consistent with the lines and maintains the slow, reflective pace of the play so far. With this shot the positions of the actors are firmly established within the set and the point of their nearness -- apartness is brought fully home.



SHOT 6

SCRIPT

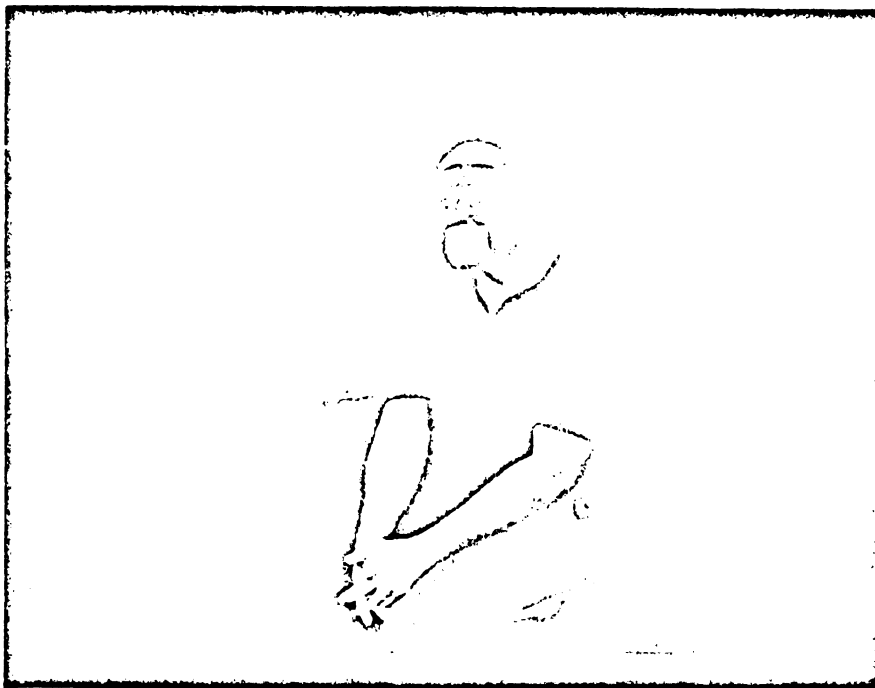
WHITE

Nigger. (LONG PAUSE: HE IS REFLECTING UPON THIS WORD.)
 Nigger. (THEN WITH GREAT DELIBERATION AND CARE) Negro. (PAUSE)
 I wonder what it's like to be a negro. What it's like to be a
 nigger. Would I be different? Would I feel different? (PAUSE)
 I feel so black and blue, I feel so black and white, I feel so
 black. (PAUSE) Black ivory, black velvet, black cloud, black
 eyes, black night, black sin. Black face. Black arms. Black
 chest, black feet, red lips, brown lips. Black hair. White
 teeth.

CUT TO

RATIONALE

With this speech the white character shows emotion and the beginnings of physical involvement with his intellectual preoccupations. The shot is wider now than the previous shot of this character and from a lower angle. The extra room at the start gives us room to dolly in as the character gets involved emotionally in the recitation of color-loaded words. As he gets into feeling the "colors" he is wrenching the words from deep inside himself. The dolly-in on the last half of the speech (starting at "I feel so black"), combined with the low angle of the shot, makes him loom large and threatening in the frame. By the time he laughs and recites "White teeth," he seems almost mad.



SHOT 7

SCRIPT

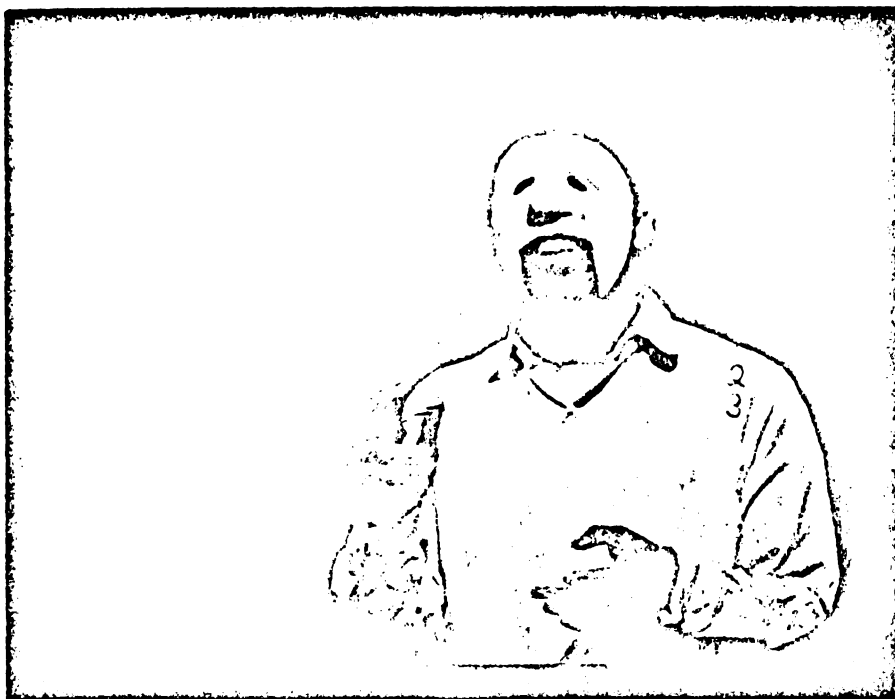
BLACK

You know, I dislike the name nigger. I dislike the name nigger. (PAUSE) Cleanse my sins and I shall be whiter than white. Wash me in the blood of the lamb, and I shall be white, wash me in the blood of the lamb, and I shall be white. (PAUSE) My blackness is hot, my blackness is hot, send a white angel so I can be cool under its wings, cool under its cool wings.

CUT TO

RATIONALE

The cut from the previous shot to this one indicates the new tempo; the pace is quickening. The angle on this shot is high, the opposite of the preceding shot. This angle and the loose framing make the actor seem smaller and increase his humility as he stands to offer a pseudo prayer for relief from "blackness."



SHOT 8

SCRIPT

WHITE

(HE IS TELLING A JOKE) They were all waiting at the Washington Airport for God to arrive in a spaceship. They were all waiting to see what God looked like. And then God got off the spaceship, and God, She was negro. (LAUGHS, ALMOST GETS OUT OF CONTROL.)

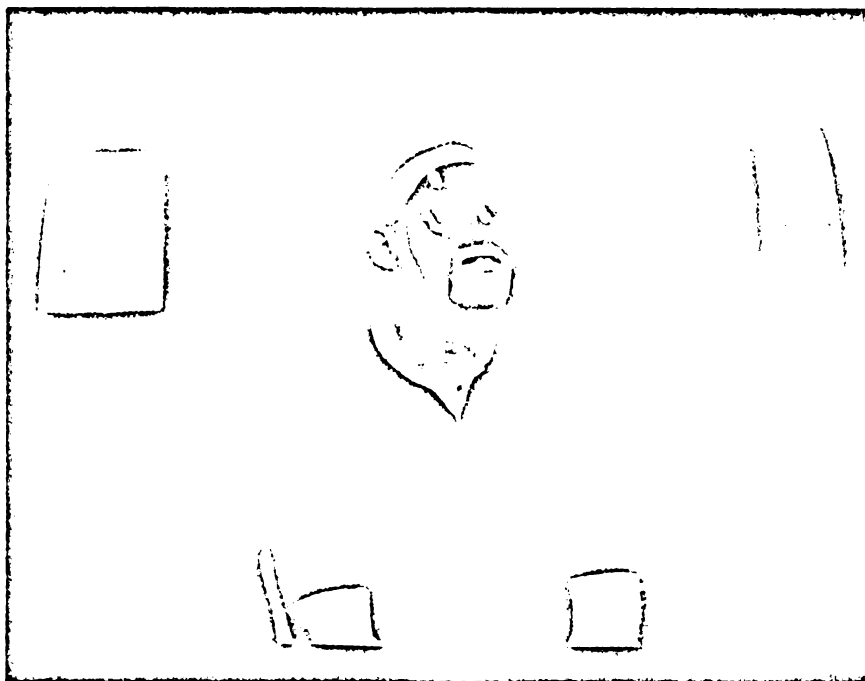
She was negro. God was a nigger. (GRADUALLY REGAINS CONTROL OF HIMSELF, THINKS FOR A MOMENT.)

My God is a nigger. I am a nigger-lover because I love my God. Jesus Christ. Nigger Christ. Christ Nigger.

CUT TO

RATIONALE

The cut will be used for transitions from now on except for specific exceptions which will be indicated and explained. This shot is still from a low angle but starts tighter than the last. The camera goes in tight on the punch line of the joke but as the character realizes what to him are the unpleasant and unfunny possibilities inherent in his joke he backs away to slump again in his chair. By backing away he makes himself smaller in the shot and so to the audience.



SHOT 9

SCRIPT

BLACK

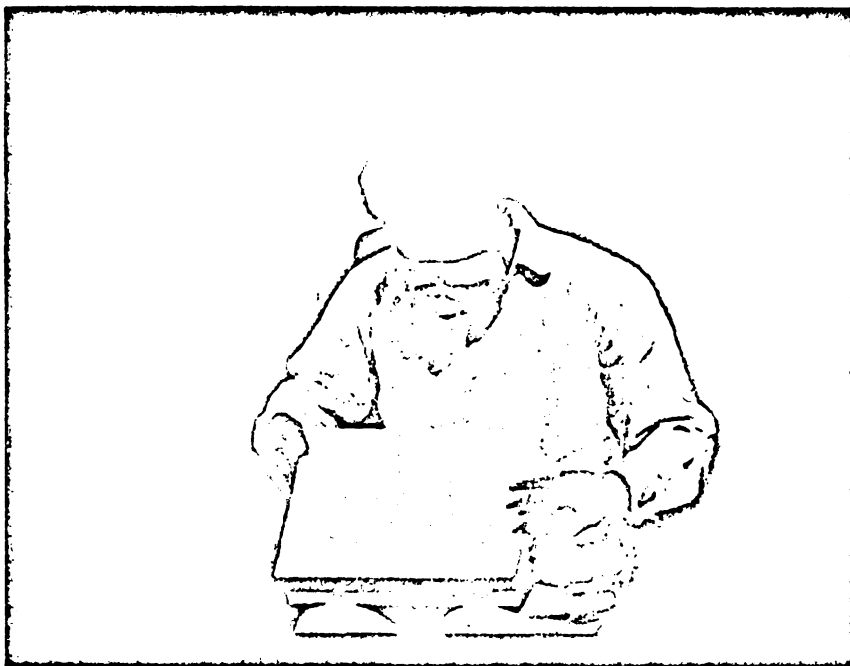
Coal white, tar white, dirty white, white white, ugly white. White ivory, white velvet, white cloud, white eyes (LAUGHS) White night. (FINDS THIS VERY FUNNY) White sin. Oh, my God. (PAUSE) White face. White hair. White teeth. Black teeth. (FINDS THIS VERY FUNNY, BREAKS UP COMPLETELY.)

Black teeth, black teeth. (GRADUALLY REGAINS COMPOSURE, THEN SITS QUIETLY).

CUT TO

RATIONALE

The camera is below eye level this time as the black character launches into a litany of white-antiwhite and white-white word pairings as the white character did in Shot 6 with black word pairings. The camera dollies in as he begins to find the pairings funny until, at last he leans into a grotesque tight close-up at "black teeth" making it even more mad than the "white teeth" climax of Shot 6.



SHOT 10

SCRIPT

WHITE

I know what I'm going to do. I'm going to experiment with color. Experiment: (HE RISES AND TAKES A WHITE BOX FROM UNDER HIS STOOL AND TAKES OUT A MASK WHICH IS PAINTED WITH POLKADOTS: HE EXAMINES IT, HOLDING IT IN HIS HANDS.) This is pretty, I think. I'm so bored with white and this is red and yellow and green and blue and black and purple. I think I'll wear it. I think I'll wear a mask. Why not? I'm not really being dishonest, I'm still me, I'll still be me, but it will be a change. I wonder what my friends will say, I wonder if they'll know me. But I'll still be me, won't I, I'll still be me.

RATIONALE

Cutting from the tight close-up of Black to a looser shot of White is an abrupt change that signals a corresponding change in the course of the drama. The shot needs to be loose enough for the actor to move around in the frame without a lot of panning, but it is too loose at this point to see the mask clearly.



SHOT 11

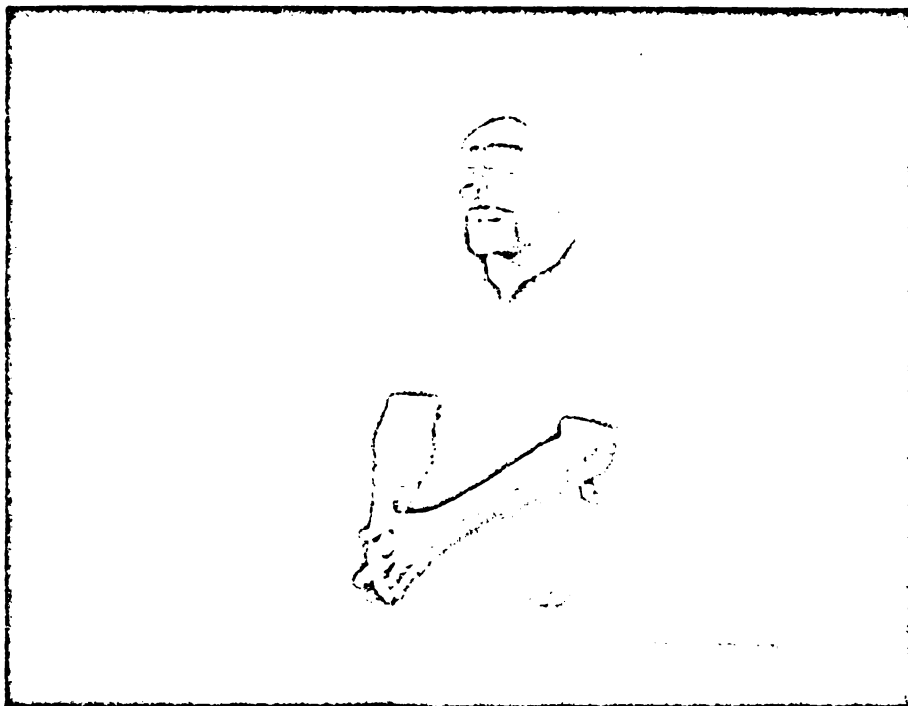
SCRIPT

(HE PLACES THE MASK OVER HIS FACE, LOOKS QUICKLY AROUND THEN FREEZES IN AN UNCOMFORTABLE AND SELF-CONSCIOUS POSE.)

CUT TO

RATIONALE

In order to see the mask clearly and get the full impact of mask upon mask and the rigidity it causes him at first, the camera dollies in quickly to a medium close-up of the actor.



SHOT 12

SCRIPT

BLACK

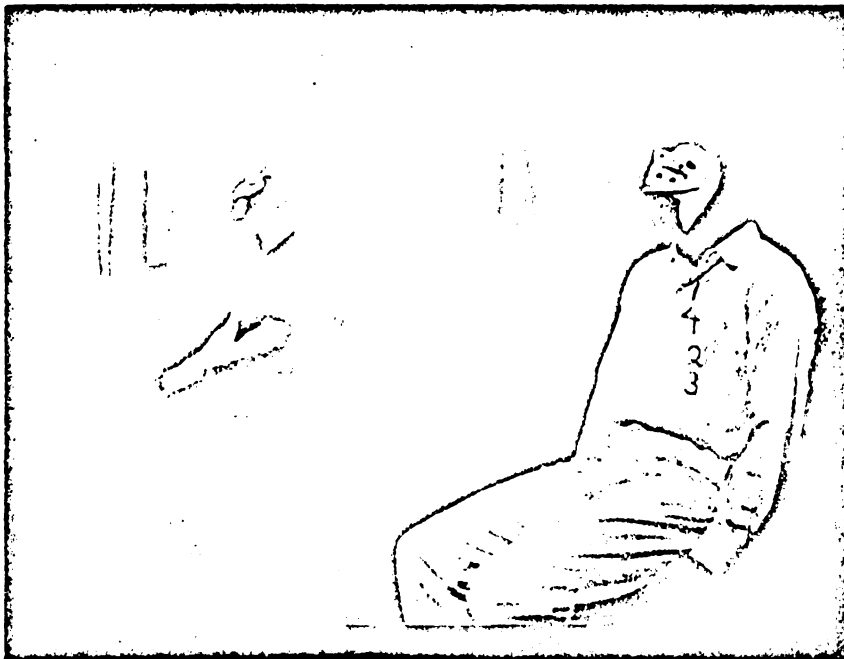
I am a colored man. A colored man. (PICKS UP A BOOK AND READS IT FOR A FEW MINUTES, THEN PUTS IT DOWN) If I'm supposed to be colored, then I'm going to be colored.

(HE RISES AND TAKES A BLACK BOX FROM BENEATH HIS STOOL AND TAKES OUT A MASK WHICH IS BRIGHTLY PAINTED WITH STRIPES: HE PLACES IT OVER HIS FACE.)

DISSOLVE TO

RATIONALE

The high angle shot is used here as it was earlier to emphasize the humility of the character. A low angle shot corresponding to that used in the preceding shot of White would not work here. The low angle makes Black too grotesque, too threatening. The best way to lessen the threat of Black to the viewer is to go to this looser shot from a higher angle than the preceding shot of White.



SHOT 13

SCRIPT

WHITE
Hello

BLACK
Hi

WHITE
It's a nice day, isn't it?

BLACK
Well, if you call it a nice day when it's
raining, then sure it's a nice day.

WHITE
I'm only trying to ... make a conversation.

BLACK
Why are you trying to do that?

WHITE
If you feel that way about it, then I won't
try.

BLACK
That's okeh by me.

(THEY SIT IN SILENCE)

CUT TO

RATIONALE

The dissolve here should jar the viewer's time-sense, subtly reminding him we are going into another time if not place. The lighting cue brings up the background lights and erases the black void between them and so for the first time they are "together" in the picture. Holding on this two shot through this initial exchange forces the white character to speak away from camera and so balances the importance of each even though White is a large foreground figure.



SHOT 14

SCRIPT

BLACK

Hell, I'm sorry.
I'm just in a bad mood today.
There's no use -

CUT TO

RATIONALE

Cutting to the high shot of Black here adds to the humility of his apology and gives him room to rise and cross around behind his chair.



SHOT 15

SCRIPT

BLACK
(continues)

not talking. Here. Have a cigarette?

WHITE
Is it a filter? I only smoke filters.

BLACK
No. It's not a filter.

CUT TO

RATIONALE

The cut from the loose, high angle shot of the black character alone to the low angle two shot with the white character in the foreground and the black character advancing on him, crowding the frame, makes the situation as menacing to the audience as it is to the character.



SHOT 16

SCRIPT

WHITE

Then I'll smoke my own. Thanks. Thanks for offering me one. But I get a sore throat when I don't smoke a filter. You know how it is.

CUT TO

RATIONALE

This cut to an opposite angle from a lower point of view is to show us the reaction of the white character to the nebulous threat posed by Black with his offer of a cigarette. This shot underlines his withdrawal; his defensive hand is raised to the audience as well as to the other actor.



SHOT 17

SCRIPT

BLACK

(HE RETURNS TO HIS STOOL AND THEY SIT SILENTLY.) It's
stopped raining.

WHITE

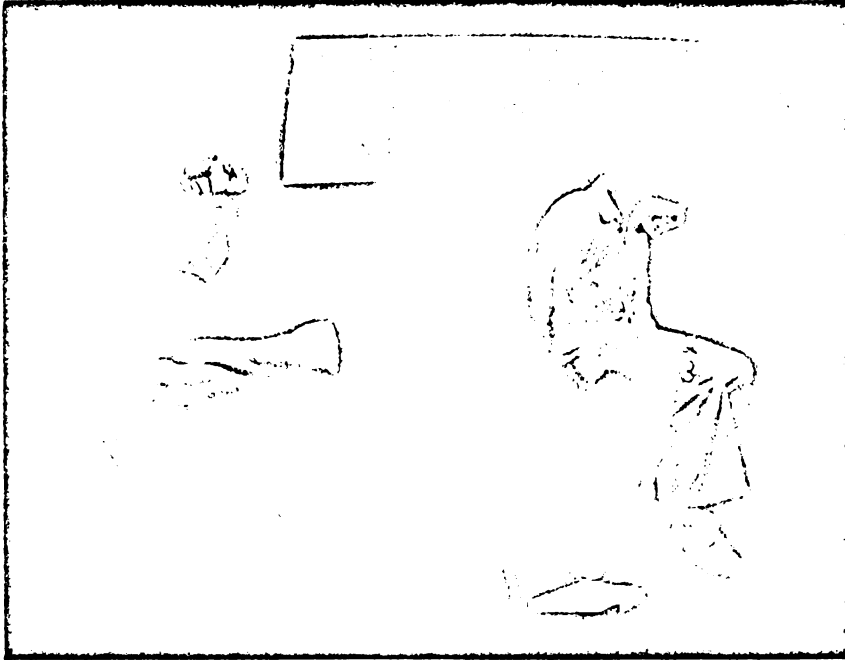
The weather bureau didn't say it would rain anyway.

(THEY SIT IN SILENCE)

CUT TO

RATIONALE

Cutting back to this opposite angle shot puts White in the foreground and lets the audience see his vast relief over the solution to the insignificant problem he faced. By staying in the shot as he crosses, the black character recedes and becomes insignificant, exactly what White wishes him to be.



SHOT 18

SCRIPT

WHITE

I hope you don't mind my saying this, I hope you're not, well, self-conscious about this, but ... well, you know, this is the first time I've really talked with a colored man.

BLACK

What?

CUT TO

RATIONALE

The cut to this opposite angle is to put White in the same position that Black was in, in Shot 15. He will advance on Black during the speech and loom larger and more threatening as he does.



SHOT 19

SCRIPT

WHITE

I hope you're not offended, I didn't mean to offend you, but it's true, it's the first time I've really, well, talked, you know, with a colored man.

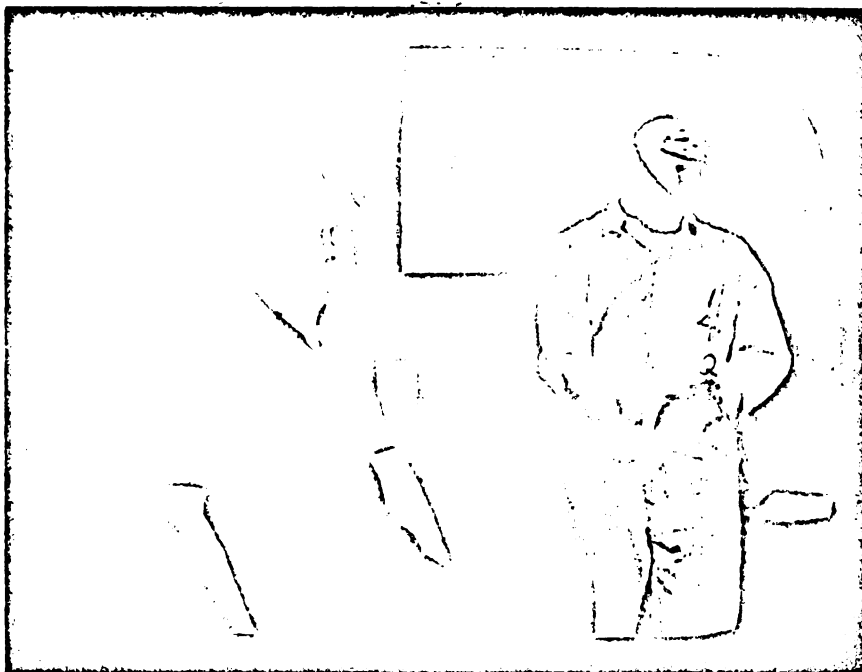
BLACK

Well, actually

CUT TO

RATIONALE

A quick cut to catch the reactions of the black character to White's reference to talking to a "colored" man. The shot also allows the white character to back out of frame, retreating and obviously unsure of himself.



SHOT 20

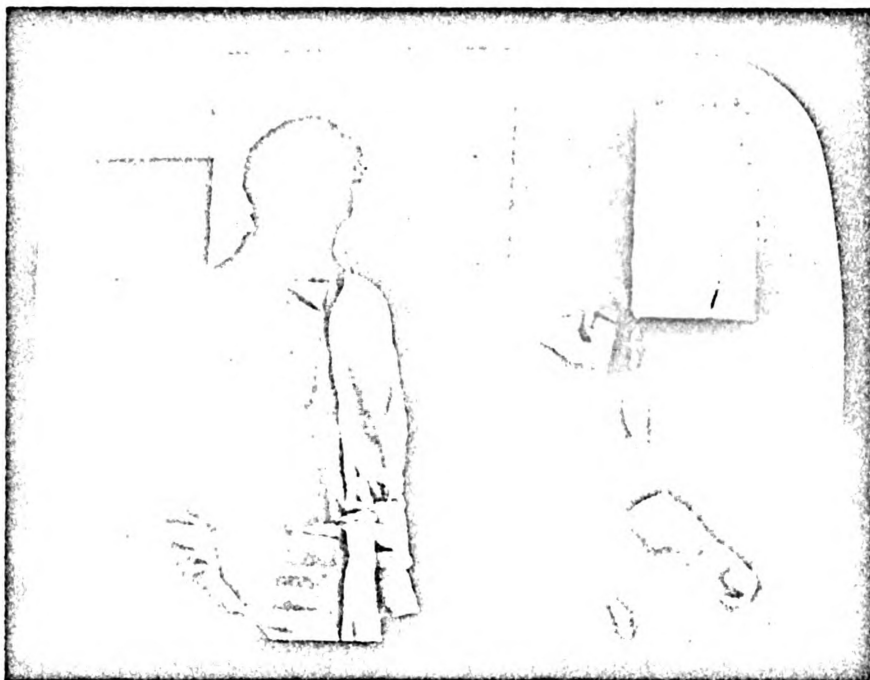
SCRIPT

WHITE

I've wondered what it's like, what it must be like, to be colored. You know, in a white society. (PAUSE) I hate all this prejudice.

RATIONALE

This low angle across Black at White puts White into a commanding position and he delivers his pseudo solicitude from this authority position, looming over Black more as a threat than a comfort.



SHOT 21

SCRIPT

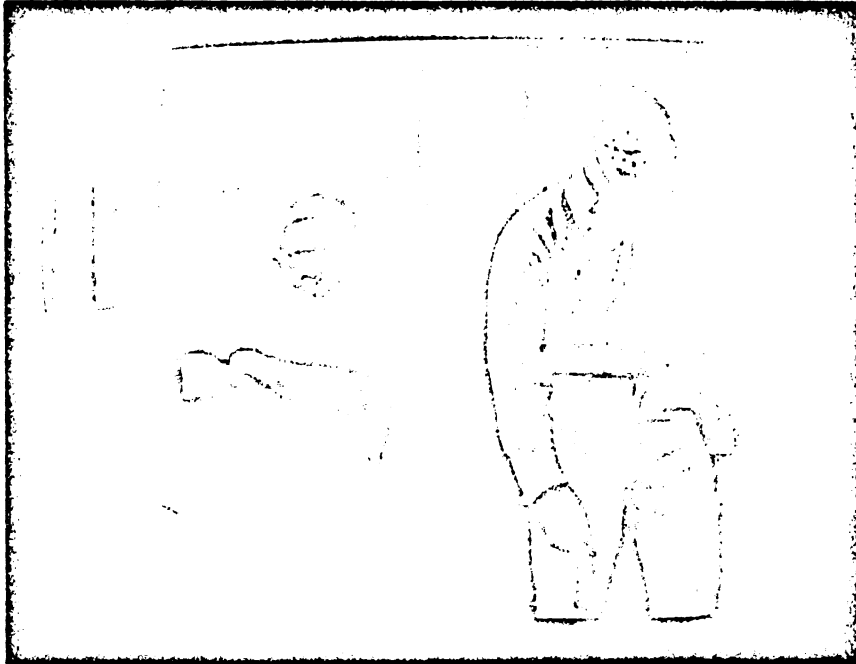
WHITE
(continues)

The root of prejudice surely is ignorance. I think the answer to everything is more education.

CUT TO

RATIONALE

White crosses behind Black now into a darker area of the set and into the foreground. As he advances, quoting cliches, he becomes larger, darker, more anonymous and more threatening, but now he is speaking away from the other and the other has drawn within himself, no longer listening with full attention.



SHOT 22

SCRIPT

WHITE
(continues)
God, I hate the south.

BLACK
The south?

WHITE
Yes, all that race prejudice. All the discrimination. The race hate. Some of my best friends are southern whites but ...

RATIONALE

Cutting on White's deliberate move adds impact to his resignation to the fact he is not reaching Black and may as well give up. As he walks to the foreground he looms as large in the frame as he must in his own estimation; he has gone as far as he can. Black is kept in the shot for his reaction to "the south."



SHOT 23

SCRIPT

BLACK

You're ... you're a northern white?

WHITE

No. I'm a western white. I just happen to be living in the north.

BLACK

But ... but you're white?

CUT TO

RATIONALE

Black rises and advances in curiosity on White who recoils in fear and confusion. The angle helps the viewer to feel White's apprehension of the advance of Black.



SHOT 24

SCRIPT

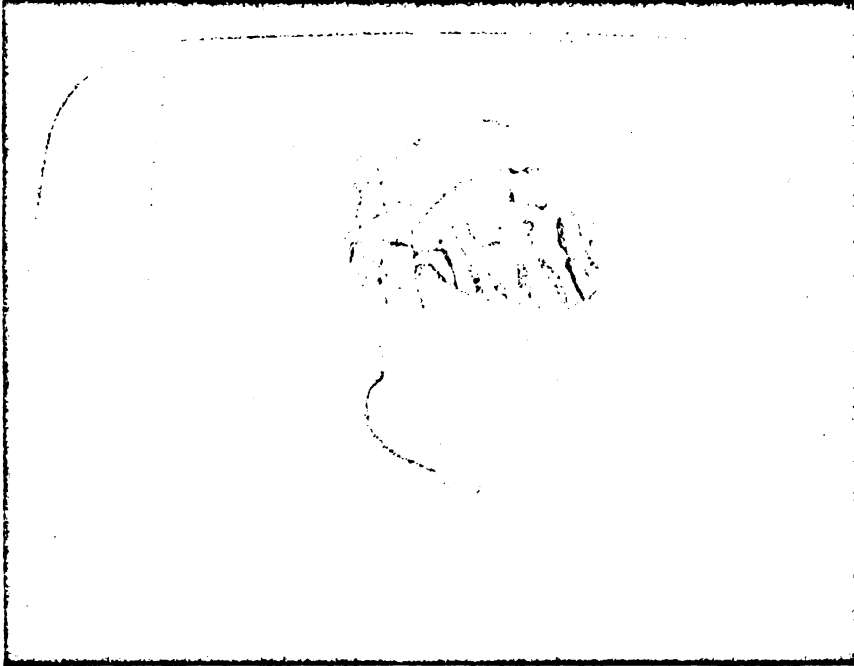
WHITE

White? Why, of course I'm white. What made you ask a thing like that? Oh! This mask. (LAUGHS) Well, I was experimenting. Experimenting, well, with color.

CUT TO

RATIONALE

This medium close-up of White is to show his confused reaction and then relief at knowing the reason for Black's curiosity.



SHOT 25

SCRIPT

BLACK

You do have some beautiful colors.

RATIONALE

A quick cut to a close-up of the black character to underscore the irony of the line and catch his expression.



SHOT 26

SCRIPT

WHITE

May I say that you are yourself one of the most, well
attractive colored persons I've ever seen?

RATIONALE

This cut to the close shot of White as he rises shows he
has missed the irony and puts him in position to draw the other
character into the shot.



SHOT 27

SCRIPT

WHITE
(continues)

It embarrasses me a bit, even makes me angry, when I realize that I have all the advantages of being white, and I just wear this mask when I want to, but you're colored, you're colored all the time, you can't take a mask off or put it on when you want to. It makes me really angry.

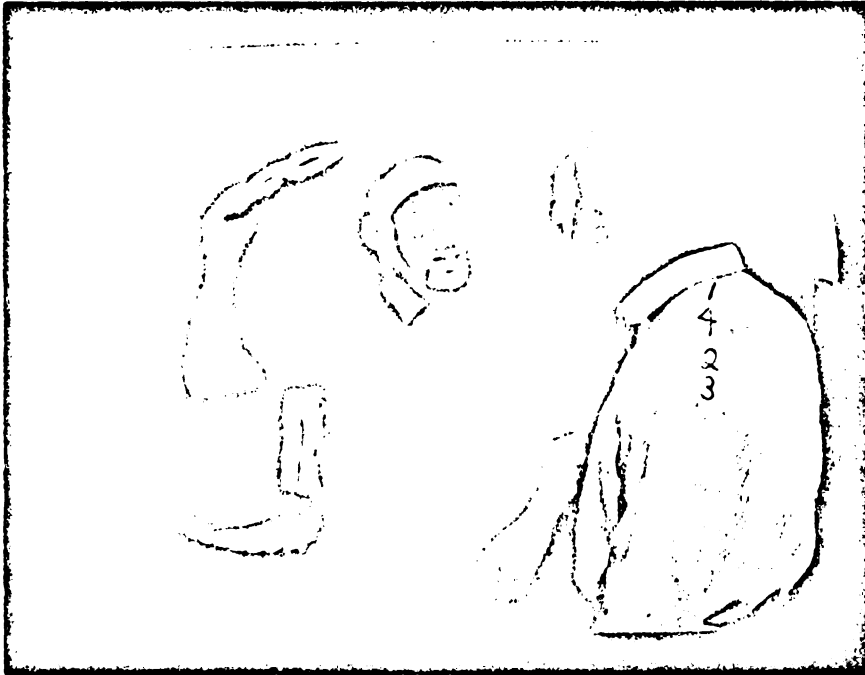
BLACK
Why?

WHITE
It's ... it's so unjust.

CUT TO

RATIONALE

Black is drawn into the shot by White so that we now have a tight two shot of them as the last shot of the "color" charade. Now they are equal in the shot.



SHOT 28

SCRIPT

BLACK

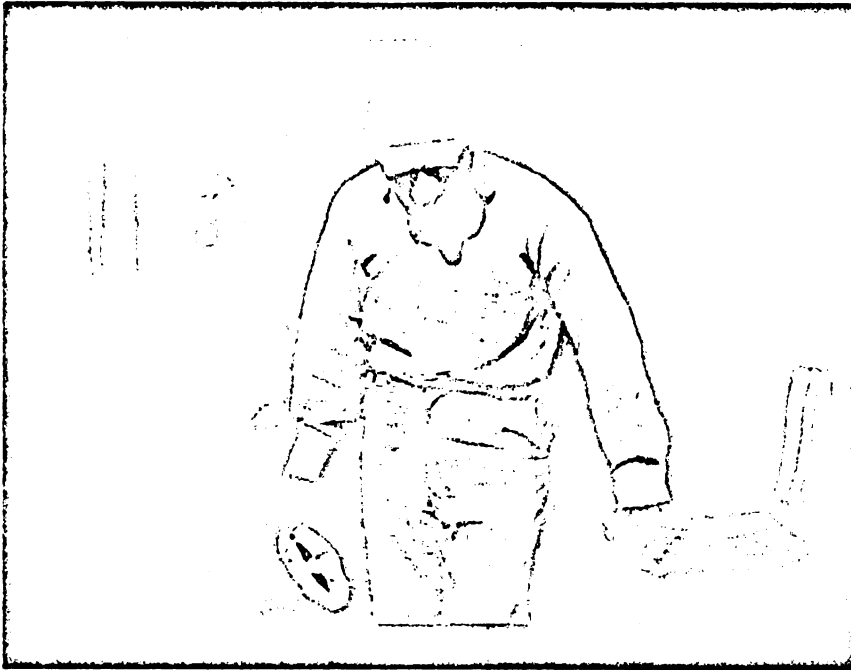
I'm not colored. I'm black.
 (ABRUPTLY REMOVES STRIPED MASK.)

WHITE

Oh.

RATIONALE

A cut to the reverse angle of the previous shot to get the full impact of the removal of the mask. As the new development sinks in White turns toward the camera confused. The stereotype is no longer what it was for either of them. Black is hurt, White somewhat angry and disappointed.



SHOT 29

SCRIPT

WHITE

(continues)

(SLOWLY REMOVES HIS POLKADOT MASK.) I ... I don't know what to say. (LONG PAUSE) I thought you were colored and you're not colored, you're black. You're only black.

RATIONALE

As Black returns to his stool and White to his, the camera loosens up and, keeping one character on each side of the frame, allows a visual space to grow between them underlining the other gap, their failure to communicate with each other.



SHOT 30

SCRIPT

WHITE

(continues)

You had ... such nice colors. I liked them.

BLACK

Don't you like my black?

WHITE

I didn't say I don't like your black, I just said I liked your colors. Why are you so touchy? Why are you so touchy about being black?

BLACK

Who said I'm touchy about being black?

WHITE

I don't know, you just ... seem to be touchy about ... being black, that's all. (LONG PAUSE) Why did you wear a colored mask? Why didn't you wear a white mask? I'm sure you could find one.

BLACK

Why should I wear a white mask?

WHITE

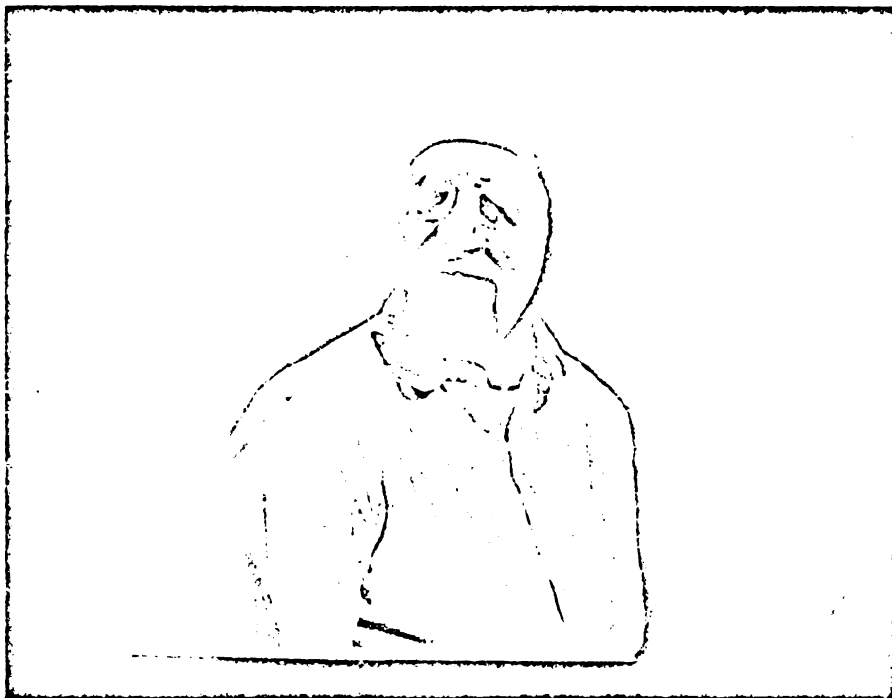
Oh, I don't know. It's ... a white culture, after all, and it's easier being a ... white man.

BLACK
Is it?

CUT TO

RATIONALE

As the characters are seated the camera pulls back to frame them as in the original recognition shot when they first speak to each other. The gulf between them is dramatized by the open space and hanging scenery.



SHOT 31

SCRIPT

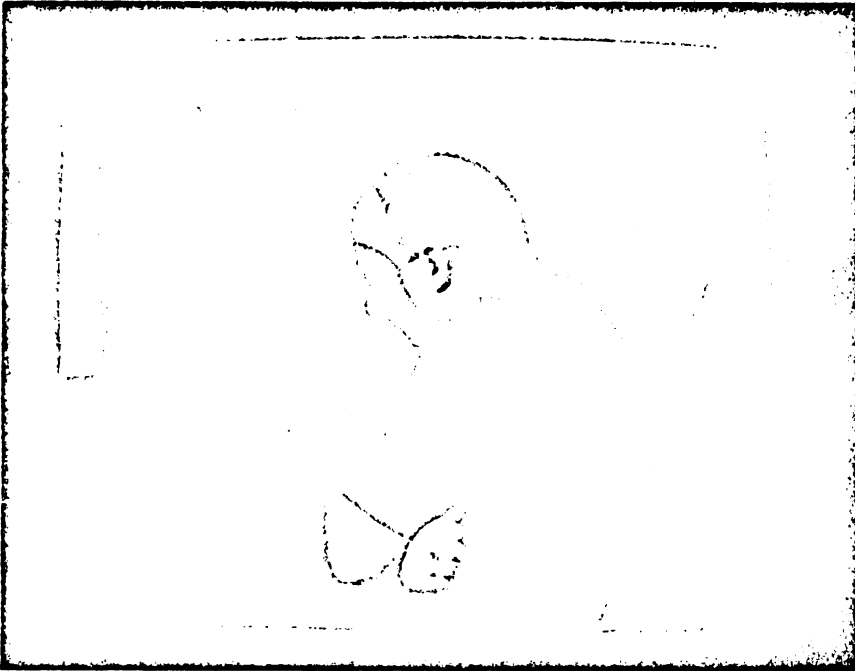
WHITE

God, you're so touchy. (PAUSE) Well, since you don't
want to be friends ...

CUT TO

RATIONALE

A medium close shot for White's reaction and his line.



SHOT 32

SCRIPT

BLACK

I didn't say I don't want to be friends.

RATIONALE

The quick cut away to Black to show he has turned his back on White in spite of what he says.



SHOT 33

SCRIPT

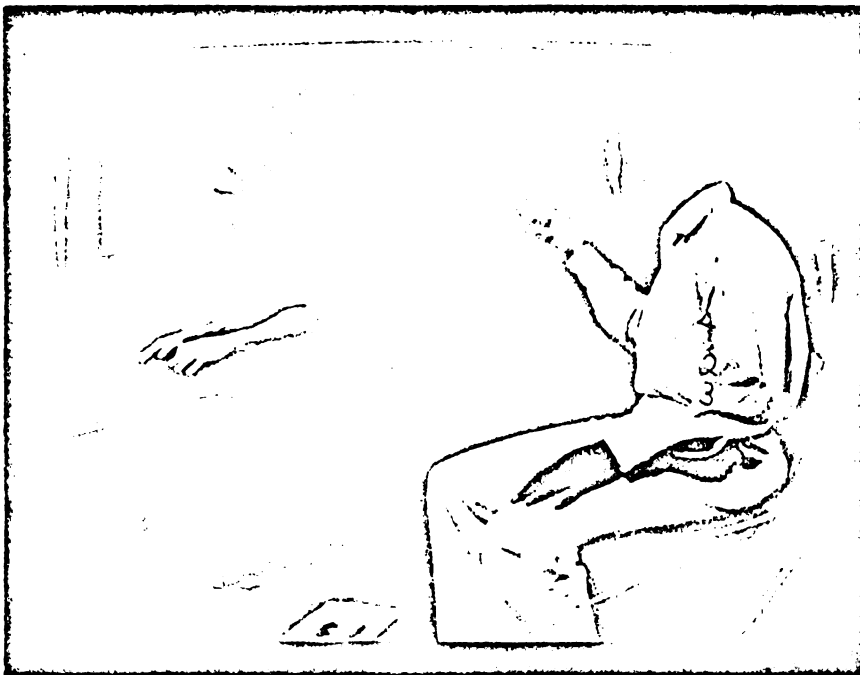
WHITE

(HEATED, ANGRY) You're so darned conscious of being a nigger ... (ABRUPT PAUSE) of being a negro ... (PAUSE) ...

CUT TO

RATIONALE

Back to the close shot of White. We hold on this shot for his reaction to "nigger" slipping out. His own embarrassed reaction serves to anger him further.



SHOT 34

SCRIPT

WHITE

(continues)

... that you go around with all kinds of misconceptions about how other people feel ... you ... you judge everybody ... just because some people are ignorant or prejudiced, you feel that ... that ... everybody ... (LONG PAUSE).

BLACK

Look. I'm sorry. If I offended you or seemed to be rude, I'm sorry.

WHITE

(PAUSE) I am too. I don't know what's the trouble with me. It's just a bad day, I guess. (PAUSE) Would you mind ...? I have an idea, there's something I'd like to do but I don't know how you'll feel about it and ...

BLACK

(PAUSE) No. That's okeh by me.

DISSOLVE TO

RATIONALE

Cutting back to the two shot here as White begins to run out of steam allows us to see both character's reactions and, again, have the image of space between them.



SHOT 35

SCRIPT

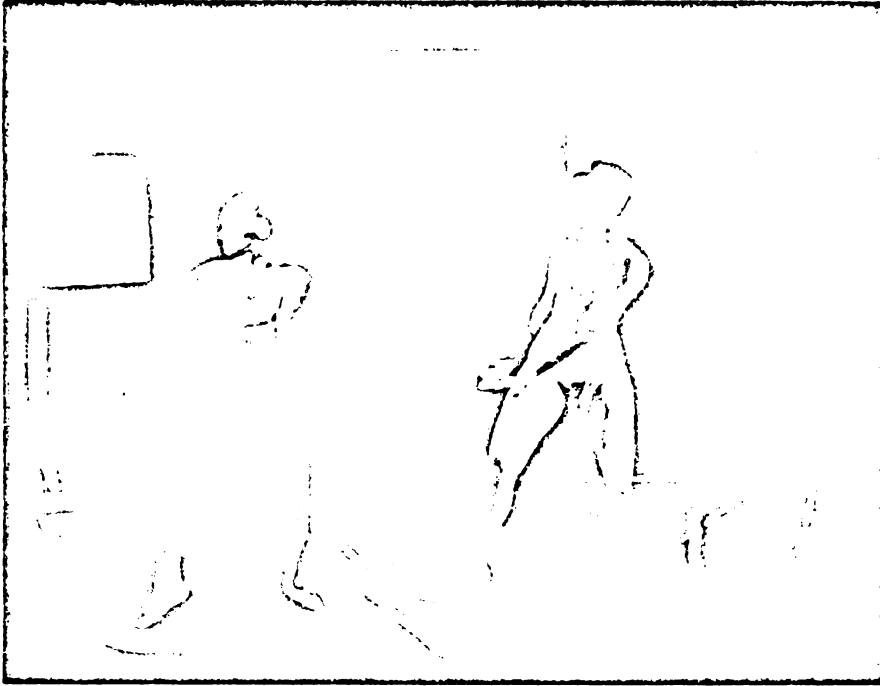
WHITE

You're so black. You're such a dark negro.

DISSOLVE TO

RATIONALE

Dissolving back to the original shot of the play symbolically is going back to the beginning. The accompanying light change and introduction of the drums reinforce this impression and set the stage for the ritual dance.



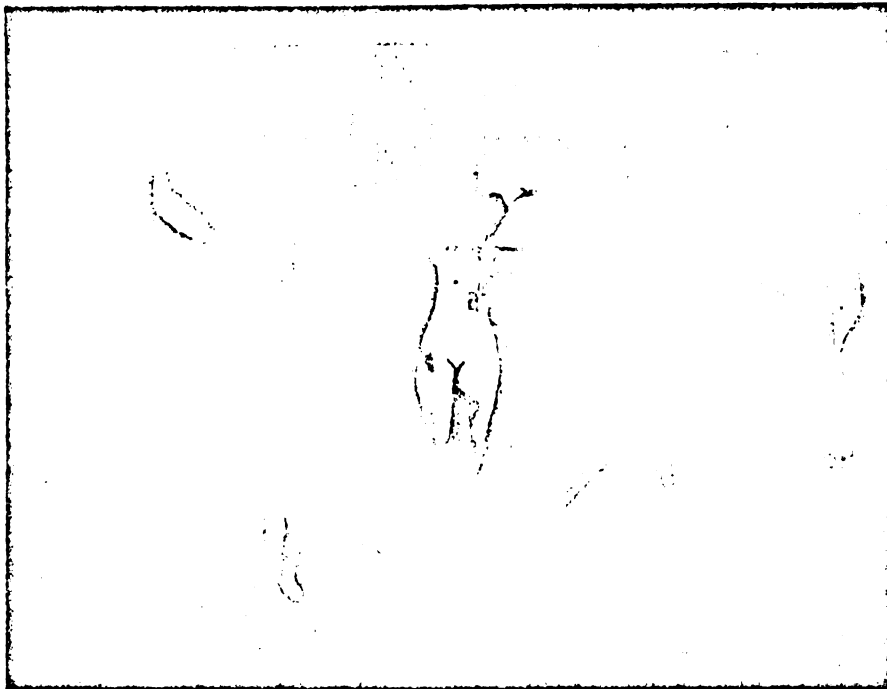
SHOT 36

SCRIPT

(THE THREE DANCERS DANCE A MODERN INTERPRETATION OF A PRIMITIVE RITUAL TO THE RHYTHM OF THE DRUMS.)

RATIONALE

The entire dance is shot on one camera with very little camera movement. The dance was scored for this limited space, and the cover shot of the dance area allowed the dancers to communicate in their usual manner. The dancers, all three seen throughout the dance, present an image of people acting in concert, of a world with depth and design and rhythm that the two principal characters seem to be unable to attain.



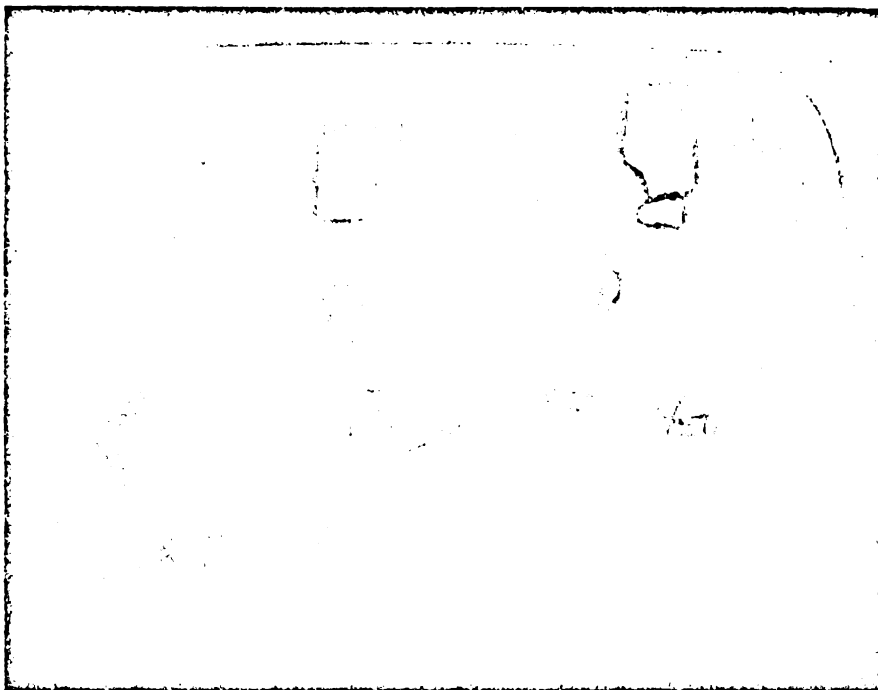
SHOT 37

SCRIPT

(THE DANCE CONTINUES)

RATIONALE

Here the camera has trucked left to show the dancers through the hanging screen. The move is made to emphasize the mystery of the dance, the situation of the drama and life itself. The original script of the play describes the dance sequence as signifying each man's becoming a new person by the invocation of the Holy Spirit.



SHOT 38

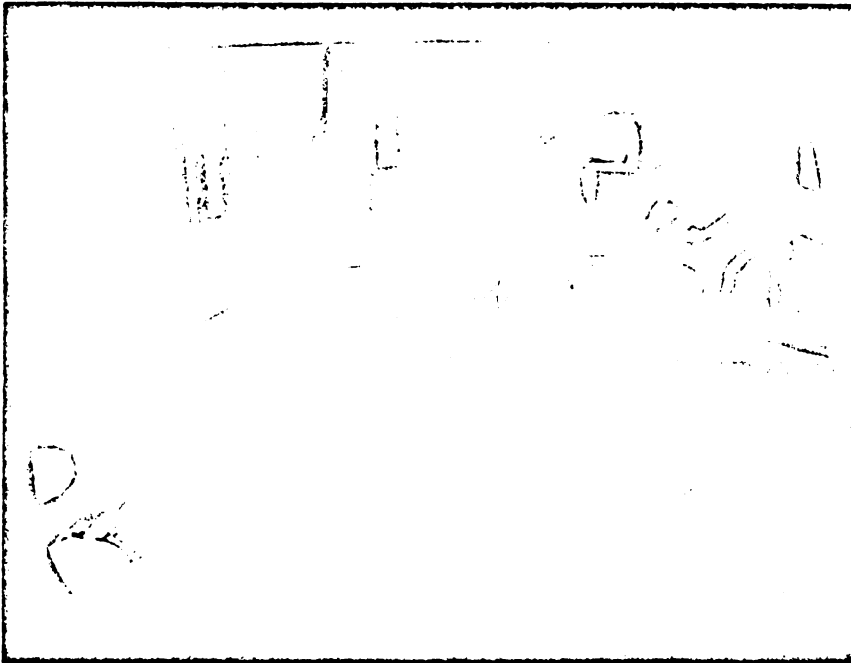
SCRIPT

(THE DANCERS PLACE THE BLACK MASK ON WHITE AND WHITE MASK ON BLACK.)

DISSOLVE TO

RATIONALE

The climax of the dance is the enactment of the re-birth of the characters through the exchange of their masks by the dancers. To maintain the feeling of mystery the key and fill lights for the actors are not turned on and the characters remain dark and mysterious figures in the foreground.



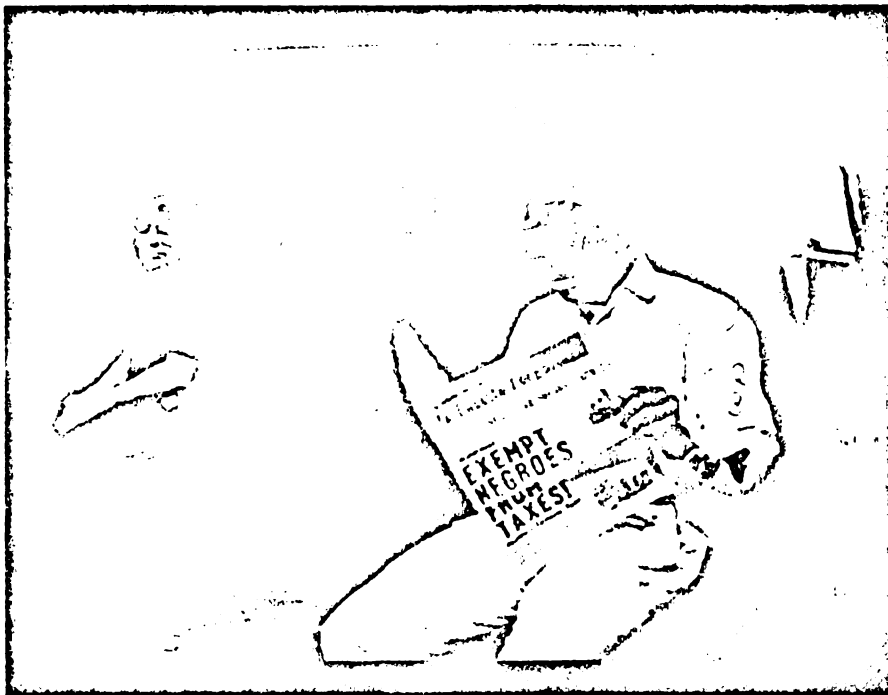
SHOT 39

SCRIPT

(THE DANCE AND THE EXCHANGE OF MASKS COMPLETED, THE DANCERS RETURN TO THEIR BACKGROUND POSITIONS AND WHITE NOW IN THE BLACK MASK GOES TO HIS PROP BOX AND PICKS UP THE NEWSPAPER MUHAMMAD SPEAKS.)

RATIONALE

Dissolving again to the establishing shot shows that all is as it was in the physical world. It is still bounded by the same veils, populated by two principal figures with the rest of the world seen as vague shadows in the background.



SHOT 40

SCRIPT

BLACK
Hi.

WHITE
Hello.

BLACK
I'm white. Are you negro?

WHITE
What difference does it make?

BLACK
I just wondered.

WHITE
Does it make any difference?

BLACK
I suppose not. Well, statistically, they want to know.

WHITE
Know what?

BLACK

Know who's white and who's negro.

WHITE

Why?

BLACK

I don't know. They just want to know.

WHITE

Who are they?

BLACK

I don't know. They just want to know. Well, I'm white.

WHITE

Are you?

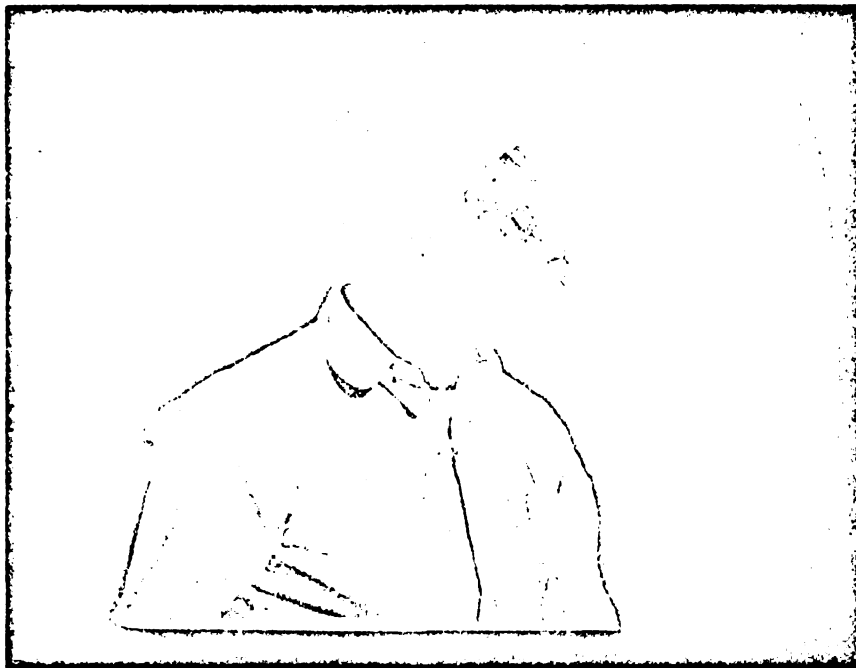
BLACK

(NOW DEFENSIVE) Yes, yes I am ... (CHANGES MOOD) ... but to tell you the truth, I can't really tell --

CUT TO

RATIONALE

The dissolve continues the impression of being back at the beginning of things again; it is the same shot used earlier for the initial recognition between the characters. The camera dollies in a little so that the audience can identify the new mask on White and read the title of the paper he is reading. The camera then pulls back for the two shot with space between the characters again symbolizing the gulf they are unable to bridge. The camera then remains still, objective and uninvolved.



SHOT 41

SCRIPT

BLACK
(continues)

--if you're negro or, well, just ... tanned. I'm really quite embarrassed about this.

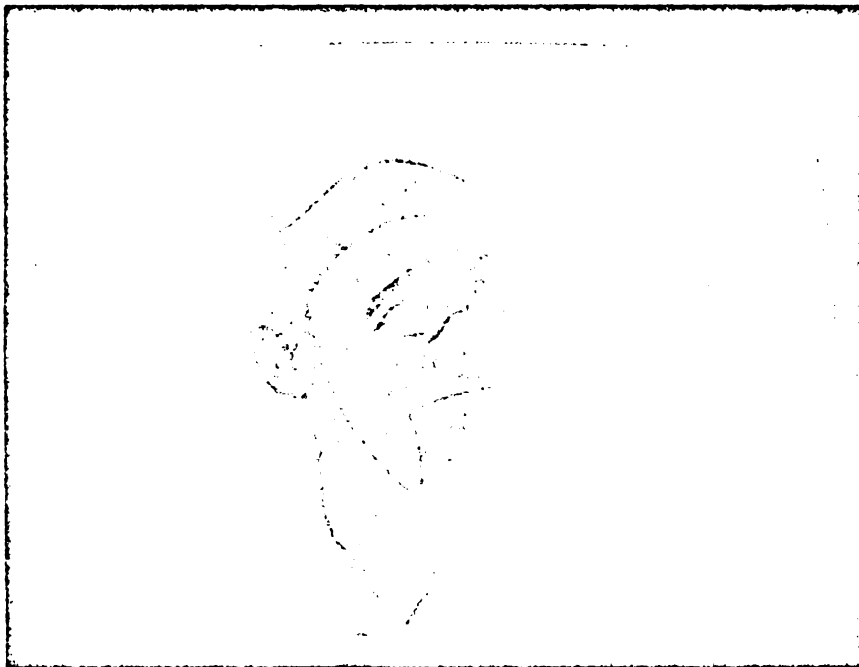
WHITE
Oh, I'm sorry.

BLACK
Yes, it's, well, really quite embarrassing. I don't care, you understand, but I live in a neighborhood --

CUT TO

RATIONALE

The cut to White and his startled reaction quickens the pace and lets us see clearly his expression of surprise.



SHOT 42

SCRIPT

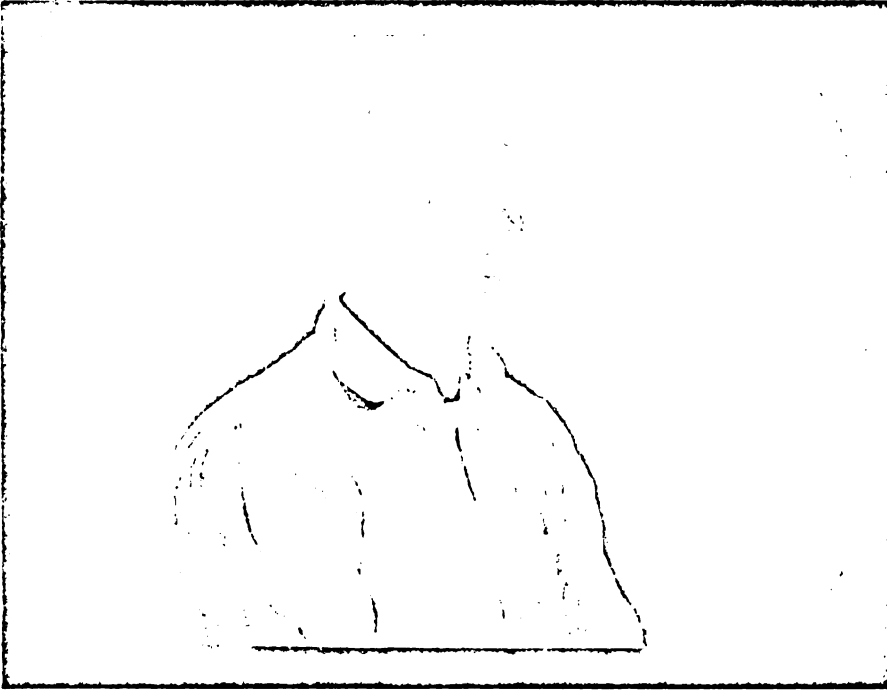
BLACK
(continues)

--where we have ... it's so hard to explain ... where we have points.

CUT TO

RATIONALE

✿ Cutting back to Black in a close shot let us see his helplessness, his confusion and brings home the full impact of his white mask.



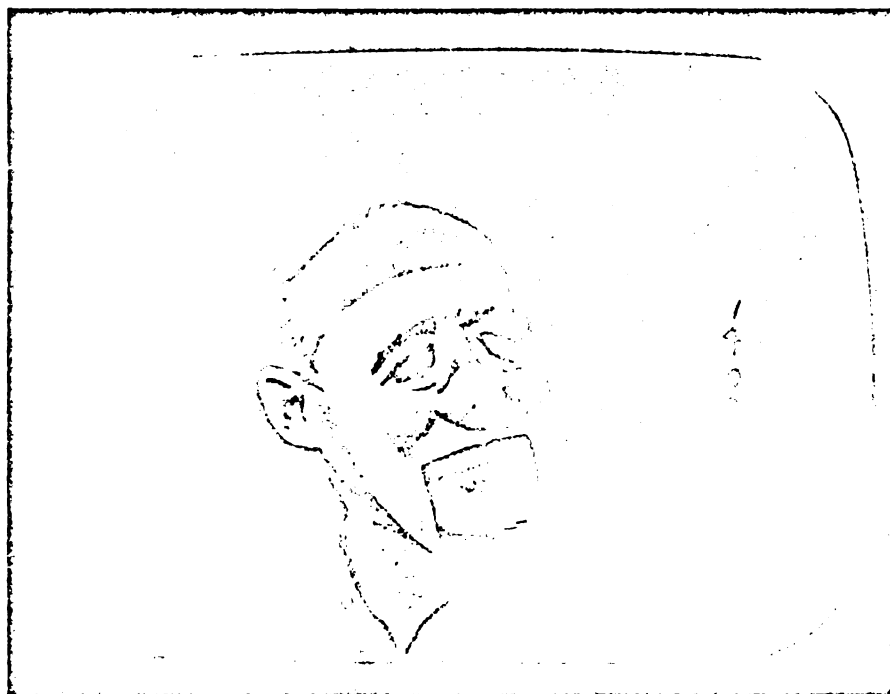
SHOT 43

SCRIPT

WHITE
You have what?

RATIONALE

Cutting rapidly to keep the pace fast as the scene builds to a climax we see White's confused reaction to this speech in a close shot.



SHOT 44

SCRIPT

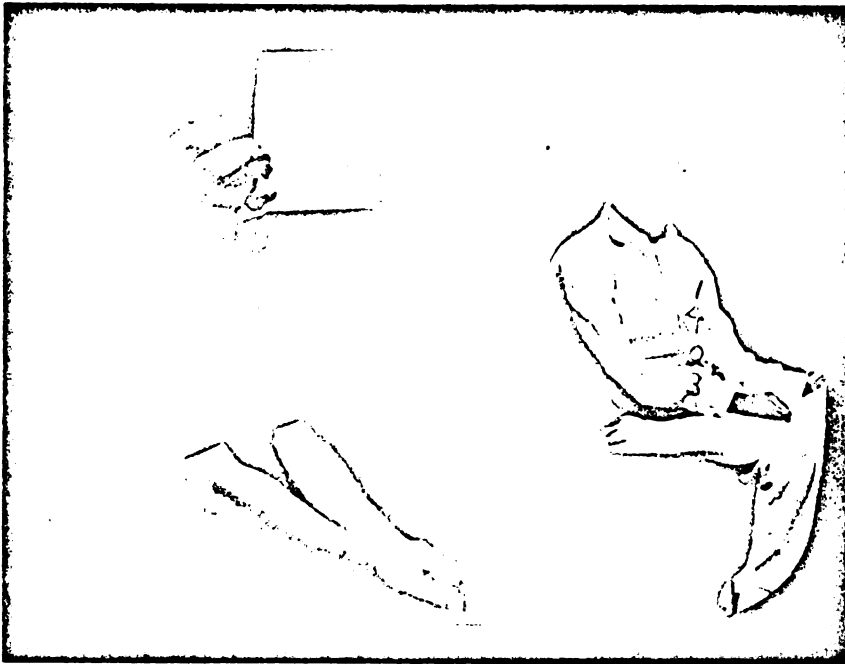
BLACK

I know it's complex and it sounds ridiculous, but we have points, somebody looking for a house to buy is given so many points on the basis of, well, his race or his religion or ... and a ... a colored man doesn't have many points, enough points ... you see? This is really quite embarrassing. I'm terribly sorry.

CUT TO

RATIONALE

Now Black is in a flustered state but he must go on, he must finish what he has started and the close-up brings his state home to the audience with the greatest intensity.



SHOT 45

SCRIPT

WHITE

That wouldn't affect me, would it? I'm not 'colored,'
I'm black.

BLACK

Well, as a matter of fact ...

WHITE

It would, huh?

BLACK

I just don't know what we're going to do about this race
business. I think --

CUT TO

RATIONALE

The two shot here allows both reactions to be seen, the deflation of Black, the irony of White, and once again, a gap between them. Black has had his say and it has not helped his feelings, his conscience.



SHOT 46

SCRIPT

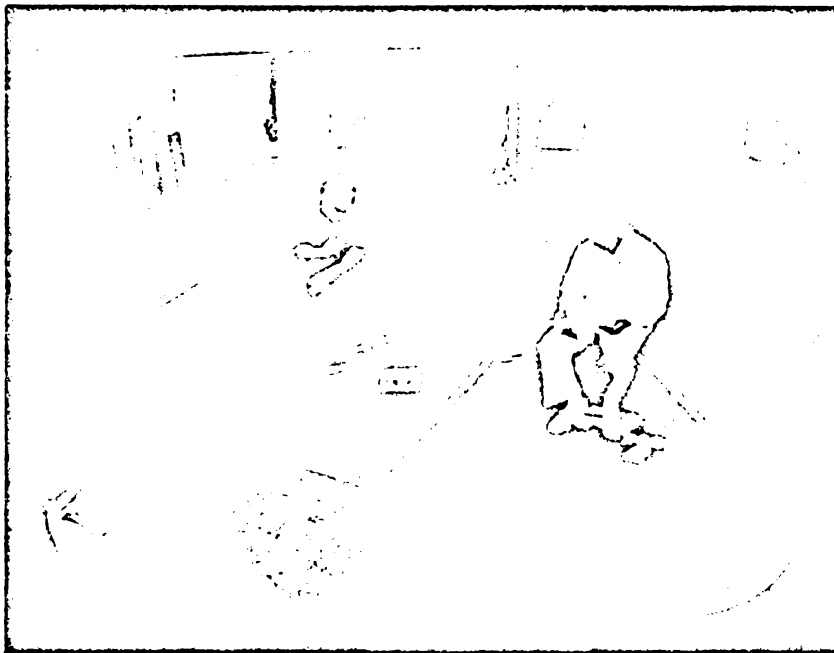
BLACK
(continues)

--it's getting worse all the time ... just because of the color of a man's skin ... I mean anybody can see you're black and I'm white.

DISSOLVE TO

RATIONALE

The opposite angle two shot suddenly reduces Black in size; he is receding into the background, frustrated, almost in a panic while White sits quiet, eyes downcast, defeated.



SHOT 47

SCRIPT

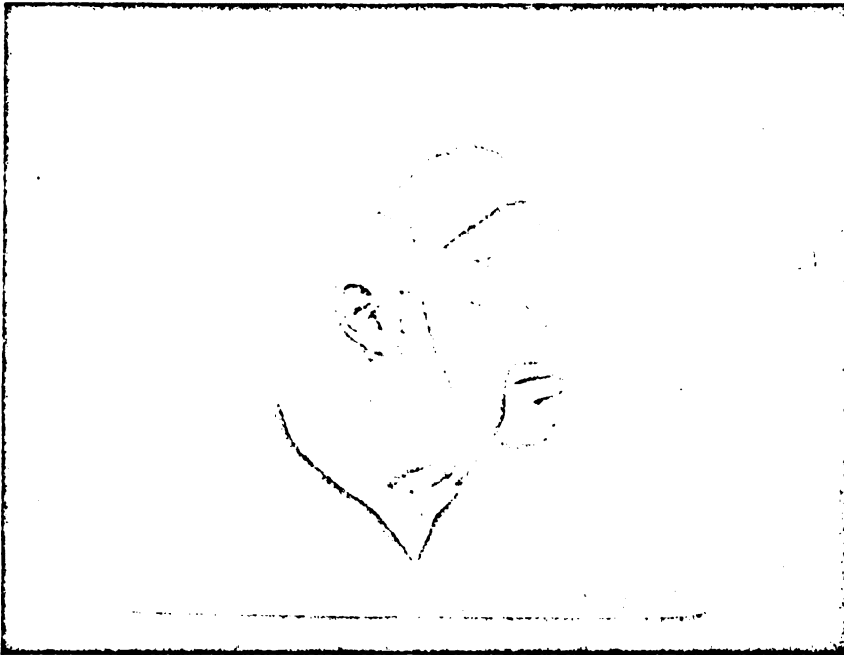
BLACK

(GETTING LOUDER, DRUMS START UNDER) Anybody can see you're negro and I'm white. Anybody can see you're negro and I'm white. (VOICE AND DRUMS CONTINUE TO INCREASE IN PITCH AND VOLUME AS THE LIGHTS ON THE PLAYING AREA FADE TO BLACK AND TWO OF THE DANCERS SWOOP DOWN AND EXCHANGE THE MASKS ONCE MORE) Anybody can see that you're negro and I'm white. (VOICE AND DRUMS STOP ABRUPTLY, LIGHTS FADE UP ON THE ACTORS.)

DISSOLVE TO

RATIONALE

Once more a return to the establishing shot, the beginning, is necessary. In this new beginning, the rebirth is repeated and the dancers once again change the masks of the actors while they are in the dark, limbo world.



SHOT 48

SCRIPT

(BOTH ACTORS ONCE MORE IN THEIR ORIGINAL MASKS SIT IN SILENCE.)

DISSOLVE TO

RATIONALE

The close-up drives home the point that, while the mask has been changed again, nothing has changed. The experiments with color and role have failed. The character is alone again behind his mask.



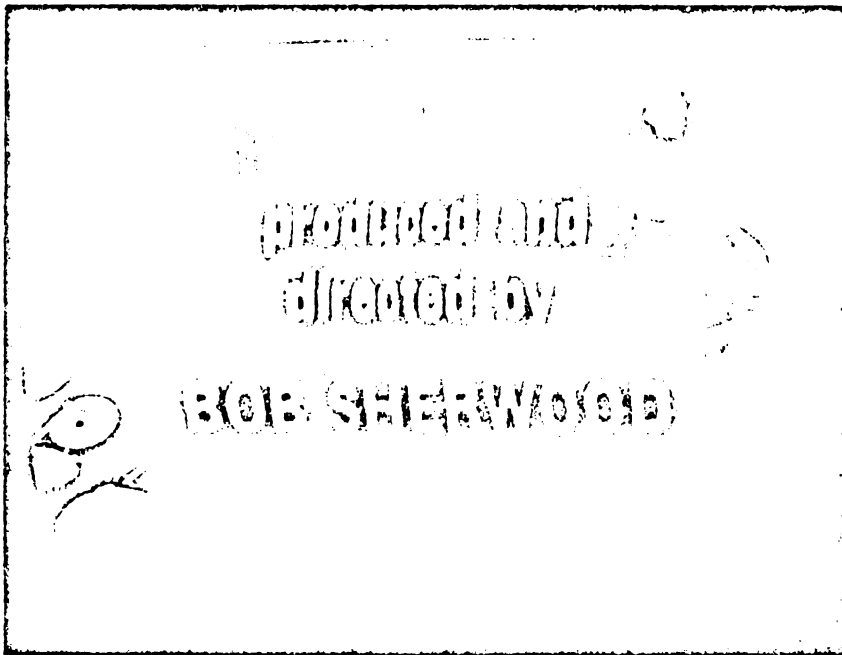
SHOT 49

SCRIPT

DISSOLVE TO

RATIONALE

A matching close-up of White to make the same point as the last shot. Neither has been changed. For whatever has been risked, nothing has been won.



SHOT 50

SCRIPT

(DRUMS BEGIN CLOSING BEAT, THE SAME AS THE OPENING, SUPER-IMPOSE TITLE AND CREDITS ON CRAWL:

STUDY IN COLOR
By Malcolm Boyd

with Malcolm Boyd and Woodie King Jr.

Dancers: Sharon Cardwell, Gloria Davis, Clintona Robinson

Drummer: Ted Small

Produced and Directed by Bob Sherwood

FADE TO BLACK

RATIONALE

This final shot brings the drama full circle visually and we see at the end only what was there at the beginning. The title and credits are super-imposed over the wide shot as the lights on the actors fade out.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY

The preceding chapters have dealt in detail with the decisions the author made as producer-director of the television production of Study In Color. Each shot in the play is explained from the opening to the closing fade to black. This chapter will examine the general rules or principles that were applied in making these specific decisions.

The available literature on directing for television covers "how to do it" completely. All of the special language of the control room and studio is given and explained. The rules for transitions, movement, framing and staging are laid down and explained. The best available sources for the rules and conventions of television production are listed in the bibliography for this thesis. The author has abstracted from these sources and his own experience those which are applied in this production of Study In Color. No single program can possibly contain all the rules, conventions, exceptions to rules and other niceties of television production. A few writers have attempted to describe the performance of others as directors and interpret their work and its intentions, but there are no illustrated, first-hand expressions of method and intention that can be compared to the final product. For the benefit of the student using this thesis, the author has included a kinescope recording of the production for study and reference. This kinescope recording is on file in the Office of the Television and Radio Department, Michigan State University. It is also available, on a rental basis, from the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

The play was video-taped without interruption and, therefore, approximates a live production. It was first aired over WMSB(TV) (Channel 10, East Lansing, Michigan) at 3:00 p.m., Sunday, July 12, 1964, as part of a one hour program entitled, "The Dramatic Sermon: An Experiment in Theatre." This program is described in the WMSB promotion release for the program which is included as Appendix D of this thesis.

The General Rules

The general rules of television production dealt with in this study are:

- 1) Attract attention, arouse viewer curiosity with the opening of the program and at the same time establish the overall tone or feeling, the atmosphere, of the show to follow, with the opening shot.
- 2) Establish the setting, and so the time and place, as soon as possible as well as the physical relationship of the characters to each other and to the physical environment.
- 3) The close-up is the essential story-telling shot of television.
- 4) The wide shot is necessary to establish impact for the close-up and provide relief from the tension of successive close shots. Further, the wide shot allows the viewer to keep spatial relationships in the scene clearly in mind.
- 5) Position in frame and camera angle can give a character or object special qualities such as importance, insignificance, menace or loneliness.
- 6) The choice of camera angle and lens can reveal character. The low angle makes the subject loom large and important in the frame; the high angle makes the subject seem smaller or less important.
- 7) The rules or conventions of transition from shot-to-shot are valid; and breaking the rules for a desired effect is only another method of obeying them.

The Opening

The opening shot is one of the most critical in any program. It should set the style and give an impression of what is to come in the ensuing program. Television dramatic programs have long used "teaser" openings ahead of their title: exciting or curiosity-arousing scenes from the body of the program or that climactic moment that provides the problem for the hero to solve. The effectiveness of the attention-attracting scene before titles is attested to by the fact that even such predictable productions as news programs and quiz shows are using the device at present.

In Study In Color all the action takes place in one set and all the characters and props are on set for the entire play. The setting is an abstract design in space that captures the abstract favor of the play itself. It represents no time or place. For these reasons I chose to open the program and super-impose the title over a cover shot of this set. In this way the opening itself becomes a teaser.

The play can be said to actually begin "in black." The drummer was cued first, and the sound begins over a black screen to arouse the audience's curiosity about what is to come.

The rack-in of the lens was chosen over simply fading in the shot for the same reason. The image of the drummer floating diagonally across the screen catches the eye because it is unusual.

The opening titles are brief; Study In Color, by Malcolm Boyd, with Malcolm Boyd and Woodie King Jr. This because the author feels "long" openings a waste of the limited time available in television as well as providing too much static time for a potential viewer to begin dialing to other channels for more action.

In the opening shot of Study In Color all elements of the play are present. As mentioned above, the flavor or "tone" of the show is there in the abstract setting, the dark figures in frozen tableau and the drummer providing a pulse of life for the scene that catches the audience at a visceral level.

The Establishing Shot

In the case of Study In Color the establishing shot is the opening shot. It must be made clear that this is not a rule. The only difference between "opening" and "establishing" in this instance is that there is a light cue after titles that allows the audience to see more detail as the super-imposed titles fade out. It is the author's view that the transition between the picture the viewer sees first and the picture that establishes where, when, what and/or who is involved should be as smooth as possible. For some programs this might involve dollying back or zooming out; it might require a pan shot or, in the case of Study In Color, a light cue. The important thing about this picture is that it makes the viewer aware of where he is, what there is to be acted upon and who is there to act on it.

Because of the establishing shot in Study In Color the viewer knows, because he knows where the other characters are, that the actors are talking to the audience or to themselves in their opening lines. Knowing that a given character is to the right or left of the character in close-up on the screen the audience knows to whom lines are addressed. Showing the audience, in the establishing shot, the relative positions of the actors shows them the possible lines of action and dialogue. In Study In Color the actors speak in a direction in which the audience knows there is no one to hear. This fact and the individual lighting employed make the characters appear alone even though they are on the same set; more importantly they are unnaturally alone.

Through this technique the author attempted to underline one of those basic values of the script he felt had to be emphasized to the audience: The isolation of the individual, his separateness from his fellow man.

The Close-up

Because the television screen is comparatively small and is made up of a limited number of varitoned lines (525 in the American system), only so much detail can be shown in a given picture. The closer the camera to the subject then, the more detail can be reproduced and, therefore, seen and appreciated by the audience. The most important shot in television, because of these facts, is the close-up.

The close-up can reveal the most subtle rise of an eyebrow, the slightest twist of a mouth, the slightest trace of moisture in an eye or twitch in a muscle. In this production of Study In Color most of these fine shadings of expression are hidden by the masks employed by the actors. In spite of the masks, sometimes because of them, the close-up is still the most important shot in this television play.

When the white character tells his joke about God in the opening sequence of speeches he is framed in a close-up at the climactic moment that shows each detail of the mask and the lower part of the actor's face to the audience. The detail is grotesque this closely seen and, combined with lighting and a low camera angle, it is shocking.

During the inane conversation about "points," after the characters have changed roles, the close-up is employed for impact. Combined with an increased pace of cutting the tighter shots point up the climax of the play. The close-up brings the audience

face-to-face with the characters involved in this (or any other) drama and, up to the point where the shot is too close for easy recognition by the viewer, brings him more intimately, more immediately, into the action.

The Wide Shot

While there is no doubt in anyone's mind that the close-up is the most important shot in television, that a well-chosen sequence of close shots is the best way to tell a story through this medium, it is equally true that without relief the close-up loses its impact. Without a shot wide enough to establish spatial relationships the close-up becomes meaningless.

The elements of a wide shot should be carefully chosen to be easily recognizable without much detail. Like any other shot chosen it should contain only those things necessary to convey the meaning. The wide, or cover, shot should not be used as a crutch to avoid going after a more meaningful shot, a shot that shows the viewer more of what he wants or needs to see.

When building a scene to a peak of dramatic intensity it is necessary to begin with a wide shot to make the viewer aware of the arena of action and the physical relationship of the participants before going tighter and tighter with the framing and cutting more often to increase pace and intensity. After a high dramatic moment, a series of quick close-ups or a highly emotional speech delivered in close-up, the wide shot is necessary for relief. The audience needs a picture that will re-orient it to the total situation, give it room to breathe easily again and prepare for the next series of shots building to the next climax.

In Study In Color the wide shot is used again and again to give the audience the impression of distance between the actors, to emphasize their condition of being confined, without walls or bars, in the prison of their known and comfortable environment. In Study In Color this environment is depicted by their stools and the small pools of light they are in. Without the use of a wide shot this feeling of isolation and confinement could not be conveyed. The immediate environment of the characters must be seen in the context of the whole set before its meaning can be perceived by the audience.

Size and Position in Frame

When a director wishes to give more importance to one person or object in any given picture the simplest and most direct method is to put that person or object in the foreground of that picture. More important in the television picture than the greater size of the person or object is the fact that the person or object in foreground shows more detail, more clearly, than anything else in the frame.

Lenses make a difference in the feeling of any shot with one person or object in the foreground and another (or others) in the background. A very short focal length lens distorts the image in such a way as to make closer persons or objects much larger than more distant ones. The distance between people and/or objects on a short focal length lens seems to be greater than it really is. On a long focal length lens distance between people and/or objects is diminished, that is, it appears to be much less than it really is.

In Study In Color the author often chose to put the white character in the foreground to make him appear more formidable than

the black character. In our culture "black" is usually more threatening than "white," witness the color of hats in the traditional cowboy movie. The good guy wears the white hat and usually rides the white horse. In another type of cliché movie the "girl next door" will usually be a blonde and her rival, probably a sultry, heavy-lipped, dark-eyed beauty of questionable intent, will be a brunette.

Taking the two shot, on an angle from the white character's side, on a wide angle lens makes the white character loom large over the black character, almost threateningly large. The black actor looks small, insecure in comparison.

Another device used to make White look larger and more powerful was to place him higher than the other in the frame. This has the effect of making the other less significant. Any person or object framed below someone or something else seems to have less importance than the person or object above it.

In this same situation the upper object or person is most often seen as threatening to the person in the lower part of the frame. This, of course, depends upon the situation being acted out. In a conflict situation if the upper figure does not represent a threat or menace then it is already victorious. In keeping with this principle, if two things or people are meant to be perceived as equal in value they are shot the same way, placed in the frame in a similar manner.

The high wide shot used to open and close Study In Color places both principles on the same plane, in similar seating, lighting and costume, for this reason. Further, when they give their opening speeches they give them from similar shots.

Camera Angle and Lenses

Closely allied with position in frame is the angle from which a given shot is taken. The importance or authority of a foreground figure is diminished if he delivers his lines away from the camera.

The low angle shot on a wide angle lens can distort the friendliest sort of face into a menace.

In Study In Color the author often used the low angle to imply an attitude. This angle is used most often with the white character because he represents the establishment, the culture refusing acceptance or admission to the "black." The low angle makes the subject loom large over the viewer; on a wide angle lens the effect can be horrifying at best, grotesque at least. One need look no farther than the old "monster" movies to see how much the low angle shot on a short lens can do toward frightening an audience.

Twice in the opening speeches of Study In Color the low angle close-up was used to create a kind of feeling of unreasoned fear, to make both characters unlikeable, unreasonable aspects more than real people to the audience. The joke about God that the white character tells is one instance (see Shot 13, page 29) and the other is the black character's soliloquy on the color black (see Shot 9, page 25). When he reaches the words "black teeth" he is leaning forward, head down, and as he raises his head he is, in this distorted low angle close-up, the epitome of menace.

When it was necessary for the black character to appear small and humble the high angle shot was used. The high angle diminishes the size of the person or object in the frame, makes any action more humble. When the black character asks heaven for a white angel to cool him the high angle puts the viewer in the position of


receiving the supplication. If the angle had been low then the viewer would have been, in a sense, praying with the actor. The high angle was chosen because there is more stress in being prayed to by, rather than praying with, someone. The angle also allows the audience to look down on the character and remain objective rather than to look up with him, thereby suffering with him and so escaping any obligation they might feel hearing his plea.

Transitions

The rules for transitions between shots in television have been handed down from the motion picture and are generally as follows:

- 1) When action is continuous the only permissible transition is the cut or instantaneous change from one picture to the next.
- 2) To show or imply a lapse of time or change of place or both the dissolve is used. The length of the dissolve can be used to imply the amount of time that has past. A long dissolve indicates a greater length of time than a short dissolve.
- 3) The fade out or fade to black is used only to indicate the end of a major division or part of the program such as the end of an act.

Over the years these rules have stood in as good stead in television as they have in the motion picture. The one notable exception in television usage is found in musical programs where the dissolve is often used for a smooth, flowing effect. Very often this technique is used for its own sake, especially on singers, where slow dissolves are used to create super-impositions of two different shots of the performer or the performer and a musical instrument. The effect is usually no more than a momentarily pleasing picture with no more, often less, communication value than a straight-forward shot of the performer would have.



Because of long usage the audience accepts these standard conventions and they then become tools that work well for the television director. There is no need to tell the audience that action is continuous, just keep using the cut; no need to explain time has past between scenes, simply dissolve.

In Study In Color time is not a relevant factor. The stereotyped characters must be seen as being in all places and at any time. Thanks to the audience acceptance of the traditional use of the dissolve the author made this point by dissolving from the establishing shot to the close shot of the actors and back again. When it was necessary to pick up the pace of the show and begin to put speeches together in time and place the cut was used. During the portions of the play where the characters are carrying on a dialogue the cut is used exclusively lending more strength to the dissolve that takes the picture back to the establishing shot and the characters to a timeless limbo world.

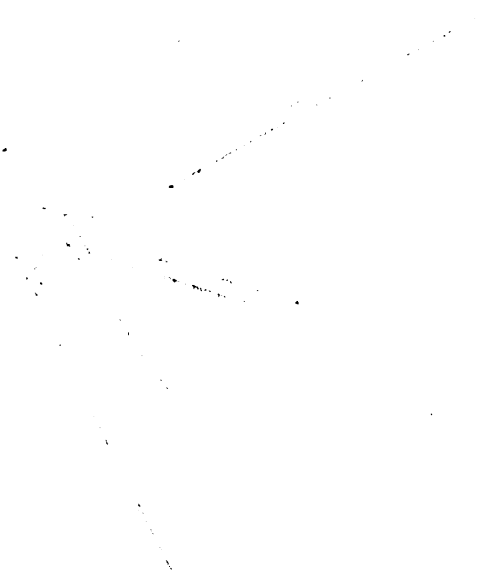
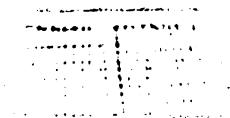
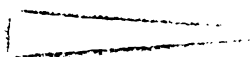
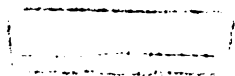
Without strict adherence to the rules of transition between shots there could be no meaningful breaking of rules to enhance fantasy effects or such things as dream sequences or absurd situations without the time or place as important factors.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

SET SKETCH FOR STUDY IN COLOR

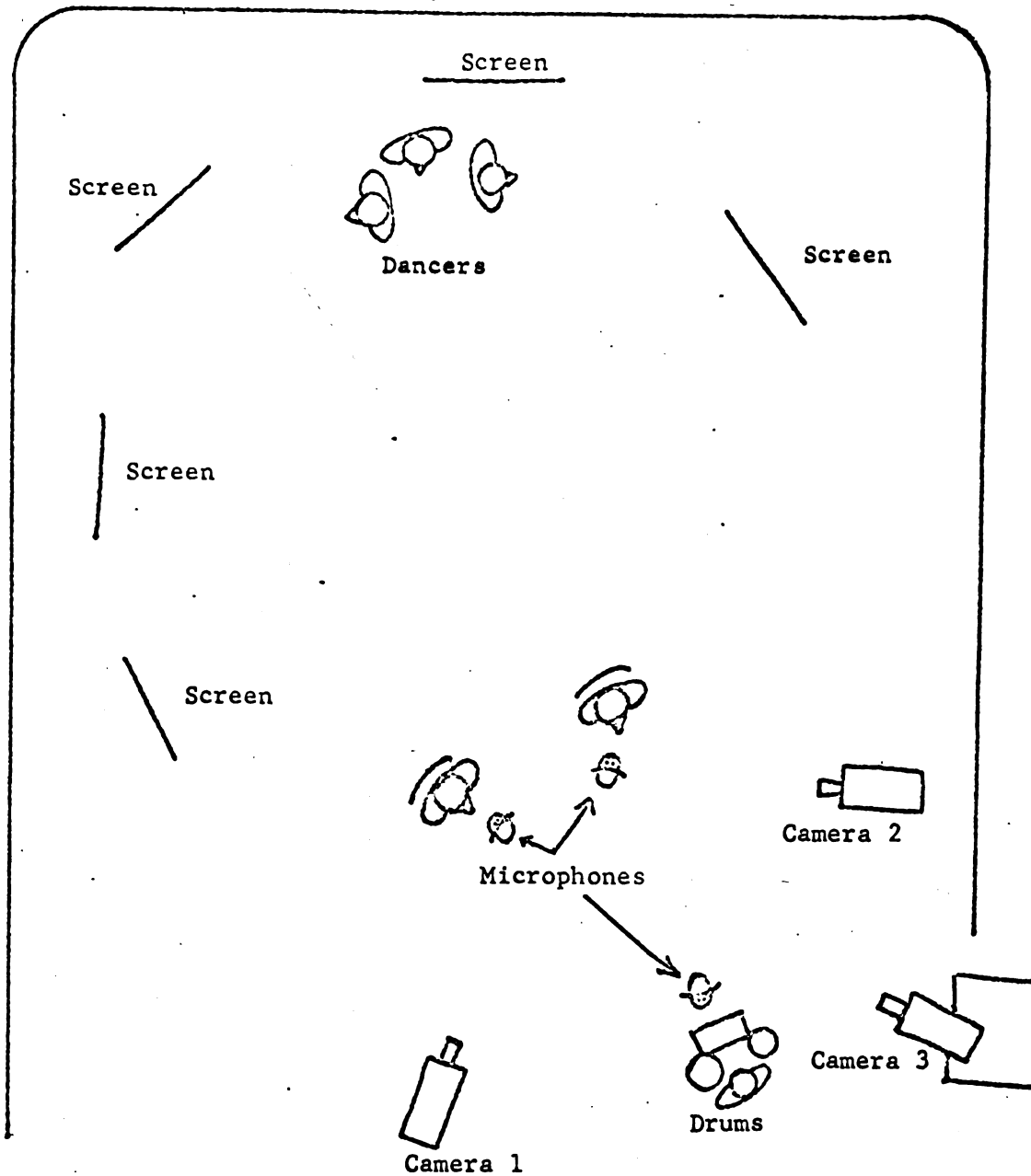
BY JACK DUNLEVY



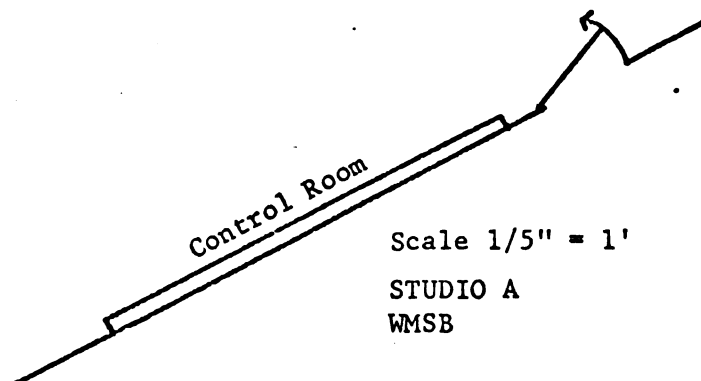
APPENDIX B

FLOOR PLAN FOR STUDY IN COLOR

Taut Cyclorama



Floor Plan

STUDY IN COLOR

Scale 1/5" = 1'

STUDIO A
WMSB

APPENDIX C
DIRECTOR'S MARKED COPY OF
THE SCRIPT FOR
STUDY IN COLOR

STUDY IN COLOR

Opening this scene over rock to 1/2

(Two persons are seated on a bare stage. One rather harsh, bright spot shines on one of the persons, a similar spot on the other. One person is seated on a severely straight-back chair, the other upon a high stool. Each is isolated from the other person, oblivious of his presence on the stage. (A white actor wears a Negro mask, a Negro wears a white mask.))

- he is reading mag here -

KING: I become so bored with color. (pause) As a matter of fact, I wish I had some. (SELF-CONSCIOUSLY STRETCHES AND YAWNS) All of this race jazz.

(PICKS UP A MAGAZINE, LEAFS THROUGH IT FOR A MOMENT, IS BORED AND SOMEWHAT PRE-OCCUPIED AND PUTS IT DOWN: SPEAKS NOW WITH MORE EARNESTNESS, AS IF TRYING TO SAY SOMETHING, TO MAKE SOME POINT.)

I mean, what is color? Well, you know, on a human being. Is it like being a painting, is it something like being a painting all the time, you know, walking around like a painting among a lot of non-paintings. What is a non-painting? (Shrugs) It's so complex, it's hard to talk about intelligibly. I'm sorry, I know there isn't such a thing as a non-painting, but ... (pause) I become so bored, so bored. With being just white. I want some color, I want some color. Actually, they say most of the world will be colored. (pause) Color is so beautiful, isn't it? Blue. Yellow. Red. And I'm just white all the time. Washed out. Pale. Pallid. Antiseptically clean. Dull, it's so damned boring. (PICKS UP THE MAGAZINE AGAIN AND STARTS READING IT.)

dur ③

③

don't know
 ① BOYD:

I wish that just one white man could understand...just once...how a Negro feels, what goes through a Negro's mind. A white man is stupid when it comes to Negroes. (Pause) Like the white woman who called up to ask about the Booker T. Washington who lives out on Boston Boulevard. (Pause) Like the white woman who has just put up a "for sale" sign in her yard, and she happens to run into the Negro woman who has moved in next door, and she tells her, my dear, you know, my husband has a heart condition, and we're going to have to move ... right away ... because we've got to move from this two-story house into a one-story house ... immediately ... in another part of town ...

(pause) Man.

start to do
 close
 a little
 KING

② (TOSSES THE MAGAZINE ONTO THE FLOOR). Nigger. (LONG PAUSE; HE IS REFLECTING UPON THIS WORD.) Nigger.

(THEN WITH GREAT DELIBERATION AND CARE)

Negro. (pause) I wonder what it's like to be a Negro. What it's like to be a Nigger. Would I be different. Would I feel different? (Pause) I feel so black and blue, I feel so black and white, I feel so black. (PAUSE, LIGHTS A CIGARETTE) Black ivory, black velvet, black cloud, black eyes, black night, black sin. Black face. Black arms. Black chest. Black feet, Red lips, Brown lips. Black hair. White teeth.

BOYD

③ You know, I dislike the name Nigger. I dislike the name Nigger. (Pause) Cleanse my sins and I shall be whiter than white. Wash me in the blood of the lamb, and I shall be white, wash me in the blood of the lamb, and I

cut to (1) is hot, send a white angel so I can be cool under its wings, cool under its cool wings.

KING: (2) ~~wasn't shot~~ (He is telling a joke) They were all waiting at the

Washingtⁿ airport for God to arrive in a space ship. They were all waiting to see what God looked like. And then God got off the space ship, and God, she was Negro.

(LAUGHS, ALMOST GONE OUT OF CONTROL, IS UTTERLY CARRIED AWAY WITH THE HUMOR OF THIS.)

She was Negro. God was a Nigger. (BENDS OVER, CARRIED

AWAY WITH THE HUMOR OF THIS; THEN GRADUALLY REGAINS CONTROL OF HIMSELF;; THEN SITS AND THINKS FOR A MOMENT.)

out slow My God is a Nigger. I am a Nigger lover because I love

cut to (1) my God. Jesus Christ. Nigger Christ. Christ Nigger. (pause)

BOND Coal white. Tar white, dirty white, white white, ugly white. White ivory, white velvet, white cloud, white eyes.

(laughs) White night. (Finds this very funny) White sin.

Oh, my God. (Pause) White face. White hair. White teeth/. Black teeth.

(FINDS THIS VERY FUNNY, BREAKS UP COMPLETELY.)

TCU Black teeth, black teeth. (GRADUALLY REGAINS COMPOSURE, THEN SITS QUIETLY)

MCU KING: (10) (2) I know what I'm going to do. I'm going to experiment with color. Experiment: (HE OPENS A SPRAY PAINT CAN

AND TAKES OUT A MASK WHICH IS PAINTED WITH FOLK ARTS:

HE EXAMINES IT, HOLDING IT IN HIS HANDS.) This is pretty,

I think. I'm so bored with white and this is red and yellow

and green and blue and black and purple. I think I'll wear it.

I think I'll wear a ~~mask~~. Why not? XX I'm not really being dishonest, I'm still me, I'll still be me, but it will be a change. I wonder what my friends will say, I wonder if they'll know me? ~~But~~ I'll still be me, won't I, I'll still be me.

(PLACES THE MASK OVER HIS FACE AND REMAINS SEATED.)

BOYD: I am a colored man. X A colored man. (PICKS UP A BOOK AND READS IT FOR A FEW MINUTES, THEN PUTS IT DOWN.)

If I'm supposed to be colored, then I'm going to be colored.

(HE OPENS A SMALL BRIEFCASE AND TAKES OUT A MASK WHICH IS BRIGHTLY PAINTED WITH STRIPES; HE EXAMINES IT, HOLDING IT

IN HIS HANDS; THEN HE PLACES IT OVER HIS FACE)

(AN OVERHEAD LIGHT COMES ON REPLACING THE TWO SINGLE SPOTS. THE TWO PERSONS BECOME CONSCIOUS OF EACH OTHER FOR THE FIRST TIME; NOW THEY ARE ON THE STAGE)

KING: Hello.

BOYD: Hi.

KING: It's a nice day, isn't it?

BOYD: Well, if you call it a nice day when it's raining, then, sure, it's a nice day.

KING: I'm only trying to ... make a conversation.

BOYD: Why are you trying to do that?

KING: If you feel that way about it, then I won't try.

BOYD: That's Oked by me.

(THEY SIT IN SILENCE)

BOYD: Hell, I'm sorry. I'm just in a bad mood today. There's

no use not talking here. Have a cigarette?

① KING: Is it a filter? I only smoke filters.

BOYD: No. It's not a filter.

① KING: Then I'll smoke my own. Thanks. Thanks for offering me one. But I get a sore throat when I don't smoke a filter.

You know?

BOYD: (Pause) It's stopped raining.

KING: The weather bureau didn't say it would rain anyway.

(THEY SET IN SILENCE.) X

① KING: I hope you don't mind my saying this, I hope you're not, well, self-conscious about this, but ... well, you know, this is the first time I've really talked with a colored man.

BOYD: What?

KING: I hope you're not offended, I didn't mean to offend you, but it's true, it's the first time I've really, well, talked, you know, with a colored man.

① BOYD: Well, actually

KING: I've wondered what it's like, what it must be like, to be colored. You know, in a white society. I hate all this prejudice. The root of prejudice surely is ignorance. I think the answer to everything is more education. I hate the south.

BOYD: The south?

KING: Yes, all that race prejudice. All the discrimination. The race hate. Some of my best friends are southern whites but ...

crossed to Ward

BOYD: You're ... you're a northern white?

KING: No. I'm a western white. I just happen to be living in the north.

BOYD: But .. but you're white?

① KING: ²⁴ *see* "white? Why, of course I'm a white. "What made you ask a thing like that? Oh! This mask. (laughs) Well, I was experimenting. Experimenting, well, with color,

② BOYD: ²⁵ *see* You do have some beautiful colors.

③ KING: ²⁶ *into 28 bit* May I say that you are yourself one of the most, well, attractive colored persons I've ever seen? It embarrasses me a bit, even makes me angry, when I realize that I have all the advantages of being white, and I just wear this ²⁷ mask when I want to, but you're colored, you're colored all the time, you can't take a mask off or put it on when you want to. It makes me really angry.

BOYD: Why?

KING: It's ... it's so unjust. ²⁸ *X*

BOYD: I'm not colored. I'm black.

(ABRUPTLY REMOVES STRIPED MASK.)

KING: ²⁹ *shot* Oh. (LONG PAUSE; ²⁴ THEN SLOWLY REMOVES HIS FOLKADOT MASK)

I ... I don't know what to say. (long pause) I thought you were colored and you're not colored, you're black. You're only black. (Long Pause) you had ... such nice colors. I liked them.

EXX

BOYD: Don't you like my black?

KING: I didn't say I don't like your black, I just said I liked your . . . colors. Why are you so touchy? Why are you so touchy about being black?

BOYD: Who said I'm touchy about being black?

KING: I don't know, you just . . . seem to be touchy about . . . being black, that's all. (long pause) Why did you wear a colored mask? Why didn't you wear a white mask? I'm sure you could find one.

BOYD: Why should I wear a white mask?

KING: Oh, I don't know. It's . . . a white culture, after all, and it's easier being a . . . white man.

BOYD: Is it?

KING: God, you're so touchy. You're so touchy. (long pause)

Well, since you don't want to be friends . . .

BOYD: I didn't say I don't want to be friends.

KING: (Heated, angry) You're so damned conscious of being a Nigger . . . (abrupt pause) of being a Negro . . .

(pause) . . . that you go around with all kinds of misconceptions about how other people feel . . .

you . . . you judge everybody . . . just because some people are ignorant or prejudiced, you feel that . . . that . . . everybody . . . (long pause)

BOYD: Look. I'm sorry. If I offended you or seemed to be rude, I'm sorry.

KING: (Pause) I am, too. I don't know what's the trouble with me. It's just a bad day, I guess. (pause)

Could you mind . . . I have an idea, there's something I'd like to do but I don't know how

BOYD: "hat is it? Tell me.

KING: Would you mind ... if we exchanged roles, exchanged masks, for just a few minutes?

BOYD: (pause) No. That's okeh by me.

(EACH REMOVES HIS MASK.)

KING: You're so black. You're such a dark Negro.

(The white player who has been playing the Negro now puts on the white mask, and the Negro player who has been playing the white now puts on the Negro mask. There ensues a primitive ritual marked by casual dance movement and the playing of bongos, signifying each man's becoming a new person by the invocation of the Holy Spirit.)

BOYD: Hi.

KING: Hello.

BOYD: I'm white. Are you Negro.

KING: What difference does it make?

BOYD: I just wondered.

KING: Does it make any difference?

BOYD: I suppose not. (pause) Well, statistically, they want to know.

KING: Know what?

BOYD: Know who's white and who's Negro.

KING: "hy?

BOYD: I don't know. They just want to know. (pause)

KING: Who are they?

BOYD: I don't know. They just want to know. (pause)

Well, I'm white.

KING: Are you?

BOYD: (defensively) Yes, yes, I am ... (changes mood)

But to tell you the truth, I can't really tell whether you're Negro or, well, just ... tanned. I'm really quite embarrassed about this.

KING: Oh, I'm sorry.

BOYD: Yes, it's, well, really quite embarrassing. I don't care, you understand, but I live in a neighborhood where we have ... it's so hard to explain ... where we have points.

KING: You have what?

BOYD: I know it's complex and it sounds ridiculous, but we have points ... somebody looking for a house to buy is given so many points on the basis of, well his race or his religion or ... (pause) ... and a colored man doesn't have many points, enough points ... you see? This is really quite embarrassing.

I'm terribly sorry. But you see why I had to ask ...

KING: That wouldn't affect me, would it? I mean, I'm not colored, I'm black.

BOYD: Well, as a matter of fact ...

KING: Oh, I see.

BOYD: I just don't know what we're going to do about this race business. I think it's getting worse all the time. (LIGHTS START FADING TO TOTAL BLACKOUT.) Just because of the color of a man's skin ... (He continues speaking in total blackout) ...

don't say again

I mean, anybody can see you're black and I'm white.

(THEN HIS VOICE BECOMES THE VOICE OF SOMEONE MAKING
A TRAIN STATION ANNOUNCEMENT OVER A LOUDSPEAKER,
IMPERSONAL, OBTRUSIVE, MADDENINGLY REPETITIVE)

Anybody can see you're Negro and I'm white, any-
body can see you're Negro and I'm white, anybody
can see you're Negro and I'm white, anybody can
see you're Negro and I'm white, anybody can see
you're Negro and I'm white

don't say again
(THE LIGHTS COME UP AND THE ACTORS ARE SITTING
ON THE STAGE BUT THEY HAVE REVERSED THEIR MASKS...
THE WHITE ACTOR ONCE AGAIN WEARS A NEGRO MASK
AND THE NEGRO ACTOR WEARS A WHITE MASK. THEY SIT
IN SILENCE AS THE CURTAIN CLOSES.)

(Copyright 1962—Malcolm Boyd)

APPENDIX D

PRESS RELEASE ANNOUNCING THE PRESENTATION

OF STUDY IN COLOR BY WMSB

Margaret Lauterbach
WMSB, East Lansing
355-7440, Ext. 59

FOR RELEASE: UPON RECEIPT

Two protest dramas written by the Rev. Malcolm Boyd, Episcopal Chaplain to Wayne State University, will be shown on WMSB(TV), Channel 10, Sunday, July 12, at 3 p.m. They will be repeated Friday, July 17, at 12 noon.

An hour-long program, entitled "The Dramatic Sermon: An Experiment in Theatre," includes the two short plays -- "Study in Color," and "The Job," following an introduction by Dr. Maurice Crane, assistant professor of Humanities at MSU, and comments about the plays. Also included is a statement by Mr. Boyd regarding his reasons for turning to the dramatic sermon form to inform and stimulate.

Mr. Boyd said the plays included in this program "represent an attack on race prejudice and the use of color as a means of labelling a man and thereby de-humanizing him."

"They are designed to disturb the audience out of complacency about human injustice, to raise sharp questions about anthropology and the existential human condition, and to harass an over-simplified commercial exploitation of race," he said.

-continued-

"Study in Color" features Mr. Boyd, who is white, wearing a black mask, and Woodie King Jr., appearing in a mask as a white man. They discuss "color" in separate soliloquies, then put on striped and polkadot masks and eventually exchange roles during a symbolic dance. The play depicts the absurdity of trying to know or classify man in terms of color.

Mr. King, at the time the program was videotaped, was director of the Concept East Theatre in Detroit.

"The Job" is a tour-de-force for Cliff Frazier, one of the most significant actors in the Detroit area. Mr. Frazier plays a Negro celebrity hired to promote the race angles of a new movie. This biting satire attacks the use of race as a promotion gimmick for selling movies, plays, books or articles in magazines and newspapers.

Mr. Boyd, a nationally recognized figure, is the author of four books, is a regular columnist for "The Pittsburgh Courier," and has written five plays.

He was ordained a priest of the Episcopal Church after spending ten years in Hollywood and New York in advertising, public relations, motion pictures and television. At one time he was termed "the beatnik priest" by the press for his participation in coffee house activities.

The program which will be shown on WMSB was reproduced for national distribution by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith recently.

It was produced and directed by Robert Sherwood, of the WMSB staff.

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