"Spring"

In "Spring" Claudia once again reassumes control of the narrative, and because of this we get to experience the world through her innocent eyes, allowing us to see some of those pernicious, yet invisible forces that bear down upon us. The lasciviousness of Mr. Henry; the self-loathing of the three "whores"; and the latent racism inherent in the relationship between "Polly" and the "little pink-and-yellow girl"—while Claudia cannot articulate (and in some cases does not even register) the inherent social dynamics within these situations, they have a profound impact on her and at times stir up powerful emotions inside of her. It is in watching Claudia move innocently through her world that we (the experienced) see just how destructive and long term the inequities of life can be when raised inside the paradigm that creates them—such paradigms become a part of us, so that even as adults we often do not consciously recognize them.

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WITHJANEMOTHERLAUGHSLAUGHMOTHERLAUGHLAUGH

The middle two sections of "Spring" showcase Morrison's affinity for recursive storytelling (remember the lecture), and we are suddenly given backstories for both Mrs. Breedlove and Cholly Breedlove. By giving us this new information, Morrison forces us to reevaluate our initial conceptions of both characters. While we already know who these characters are, this is where we learn how and why they became who they are, and learning of their past experiences suddenly renders each character far more complex and complicated than perhaps we originally thought.

It's Mrs. Breedlove who is first addressed, and it's here that we sadly discover how a dream dies. Pauline tells much of her story in her own words (another example of Morrison giving voice to the voiceless), and we are taken all the way back to her childhood, as "the ninth of eleven children" in rural Alabama, "seven miles from the nearest road." We meet a quiet, orderly, and responsible young girl, who turns into a dreamy eyed adolescent longing to escape her humble life. We witness her courtship and marriage to Cholly Breedlove, and, somewhat surprisingly, the love and happiness they once shared. And then we watch, painfully, as little by little the dream slips away, a bitterness takes hold, and Pauline eventually becomes the neglectful, at times hateful, spiteful, and "ugly" woman we have come to know. It's in Pauline that we recognize how wide the gap can be between our romantic ideals and the reality of our surroundings, and how self-inflicted our wounds can become if we cling too blindly to the former without learning how to manage the latter.

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It's Cholly who is addressed next, and it's here that we discover how to build a monster. It's here that we also must recognize the skill of Morrison as an author: to have given us the monster fully formed—and most of us would agree that few sins are as monstrous as Cholly's—at the beginning of the novel, and then to somehow make us feel—if only a little bit—sympathetic for that monster. Morrison's gift as a writer is clear. Though we do not find Cholly's hardships in any way an excuse for his crimes against Pecola, we do see an explanation for such a trainwreck of a life. This harkens back to the prologue, where the narrator says: "But since *why* is difficult to handle, one must take

refuge in *how*." Morrison suggest in this section that while we might never understand *why* Cholly did what he did (some crimes are just too unimaginably heinous), we may at least approach the question by understanding *how* he became such a monster to begin with.

"When Cholly was four days old, his mother wrapped him in two blankets and left him on a junk heap by the railroad." She didn't even name him. He never knew his father. He was raised by an elderly aunt who rescued him from the junk heap but often reminded him of how little his parents cared for him, and who died when Cholly was only a boy. His spirit not yet broken by the world, as a teenager Cholly fell in love with a girl named Darlene, but his first sexual experience was a violation both humiliating and violent, further confusing his understanding of love and sex. Nameless, motherless, fatherless, violently humiliated, and eventually altogether abandoned, is it any wonder that Cholly grew into the monster we see at the beginning of the novel? With no one to care for him and no one to care for, Cholly moved through the world without any internal or external compass. He was bound to falter in one way or another; it was simply a matter of time and damage. As Morrison writes, "Cholly was free. Dangerously free."