Commentary of « Merry-go-round »

This black child who comes from down South has known racial segregation ever since he was born. He knows that on buses there black people have to sit in the back; likewise, on trains, there are cars reserved for them. Where they have to sit is called the Jim Crow section, in reference to the infamous laws forbidding Blacks to mix with Whites in public places.This black child is now in the North  a new country to him  and would like to ride on a merry-go-round  a new problem. Indeed, as we are made to understand, there is no Jim Crow section on a merry-go-round for the simple reason that it has neither front nor back. The questions he asks the adult  maybe a white man can therefore receive no satisfactory answers. Yet we are not really interested in the answers, all the more so as there are none given. Only the child’s questions matter here. They are meant to make us realise that racial discrimination is a purely arbitrary process and that its logic is far from impeccable. This particular case  the merry-go-round  blatantly exposes its intrinsic inanity since the circular shape of the carousel prevents any form of segregation.The black child is therefore confronted to a situation where the old rules no longer apply and is at a loss for what to do. Here again, whether he eventually chooses to ride on the merry-go-round or not is quite irrelevant. The point is that he is offered an option he was never allowed to contemplate hitherto. Paradoxically, the world has opened up in the form of a closed circle. But this figure of a circle is first and foremost a metaphor for a perfect  or at least, better  world, freed of all its man-made divisions and therefore returned to its primeval innocence, where anybody can live free regardless of the colour of their skin.