

GERALD MURNANE'S FIRST ACCLAIMED NOVEL

TAMARISK ROW

GERALD MURNANE

"ONE OF THE MOST ORIGINAL
WRITERS WORKING IN AUSTRALIA TODAY"

THE AUSTRALIAN



TAMARISK ROW

GERALD MURNANE



*All characters in this book are
entirely fictitious, and no reference
is intended to any living person.*

ANGUS & ROBERTSON PUBLISHERS

*Unit 4, Eden Park, 31 Waterloo Road,
North Ryde, NSW, Australia 2113, and
16 Golden Square, London W1R 4BN,
United Kingdom*

*This book is copyright.
Apart from any fair dealing for the
purposes of private study, research,
criticism or review, as permitted
under the Copyright Act, no part may
be reproduced by any process without
written permission. Inquiries should
be addressed to the publishers.*

*First published by William Heinemann Australia 1974
A&R Arkon edition 1977
Sirius Quality Paperbacks edition 1983
This New Sirius edition 1988*

Copyright © Gerald Murnane, 1974

*National Library of Australia
Cataloguing-in-publication data.*

*Murnane, Gerald, 1939-
Tamarisk Row.*

ISBN 0 207 16023 6

I. Title.

A823'.3

Printed in Australia by Griffin Press

Gerald Murnane was born in 1939 in Melbourne. As a child he spent four years in northern Victoria, but has lived in Melbourne continuously since then. He is married with three sons.

His first novel, *Tamarisk Row*, was a runner-up in the Age Book of the Year Award in 1974. It was followed by *A Lifetime on Clouds* (1976), *The Plains* (1982), *Landscape with Landscape* (1985) and *Inland* (1988).

A U T H O R ' S N O T E

If you could fill each square on a calendar with a picture instead of a number, and if each picture could show clearly some event or landscape or recollection or dream that made each day memorable, then after a long time and from a great distance the hundreds of pictures might rearrange themselves to form surprising patterns.

Tamarisk Row is one such pattern.

Clement Killeaton looks at a calendar

On one of the last days of December 1947 a nine-year-old boy named Clement Killeaton and his father, Augustine, look up for the first time at a calendar published by St Columban's Missionary Society. The first page of the calendar is headed *January 1948* and has a picture of Jesus and his parents resting on their journey from Palestine to Egypt. Below the picture, the page is divided by thick black lines into thirty-one yellow squares. Each of the squares is a day all over the plains of northern Victoria and over the city of Bassett where Clement and his parents set out and return home across the orange quartz gravel of footpaths and the black strips of bitumen in the centres of streets, only seldom remembering that high over a landscape of bright patterns of days the boy-hero of their religion looks out across journeys of people the size of fly-specks across paper the colour of sunlight in years he can never forget.

Bassett hears music from America

While the calendar for 1947 hangs out of sight beneath the new one, Clement Killeaton lifts a sheaf of pages and sees in the yellow squares the familiar shape of late-afternoon sunlight that he crosses to reach Mr Wallace's corner store. All around the blistered weatherboards of the Wallaces' shop and attached house are brightly painted signs whose consistent colours and unwavering lines are the work of a people who live far away beyond the blur of dust or haze at the farthest end of Killeaton's street, in the labyrinthine mansions with peacock-studded lawns that slope down towards dark-blue ponds. There in a room with enormous windows a man with a polka-dotted

bow tie broadcasts radio programs to listeners all over the plains of northern Victoria, telling them about America where people are still celebrating the end of the war. He plays for his listeners a record that has just arrived in Australia. The last words of the song are – *in the hills of Idaho in the hills of Idaho*. While the record is still playing, the man walks to a window through which someone, perhaps an American soldier, once looked out, across a great distance, towards a few faint ridges of the real Idaho. Tears fill the man's eyes. When the music stops, thousands of people in Bassett and the country for miles around hear him blowing his nose and clearing his throat.

The Wallaces' marvellous aviary

Clement opens the door of the grocer's shop and almost catches Mr Wallace doing something shameful behind a stack of biscuit-tins. The boy buys groceries for his mother and then asks politely may he look at Mr Wallace's aviary. The man shows him out through the back door. Past the crates of empty soft-drink bottles and the brittle tops of dead spear-grass are the towering walls of fine wire-netting. Behind the wire the dense shrubs and trees are planted in the shape of landscapes from every part of Australia. Hidden among the grasslands and scrub and forests and swamps and deserts are the nests of nearly every species of Australian bird. Somewhere past the dangling black and yellow of regent honey-eaters and the elusive crimson and turquoise of paradise parrots Margaret Wallace, a girl no older than Clement, is building a bower like the satin bower-birds' – a velvety resting-place enclosing more secrets than any dome-shaped nest of wrens or burrow of pardalotes but open to the sky so that whatever is done within its walls will be remembered as happening by sunlight. But Clement is not able to search for the place. Behind him in the yard Margaret Wallace calls out to him to visit her in her playhouse made of boxes and cardboard. She sits under the sign *Old Dutch Cleaner Chases Dirt*, cramming into her mouth the lollies she has stolen from her father's shop. Clement peers through the door into the dim playhouse. He still hopes that one day the two of them will pull down each other's pants and stare at each other in a secluded place like an aviary. Margaret is more friendly than on other days. She offers him humbugs, musks, and tarzan jubes. Her hands are brightly stained and sticky with sugar. Clement asks her has she

noticed any birds mating and breeding in the aviary lately, but Margaret wants to talk about how soon her parents will have saved enough money to buy a house in a better part of Bassett and get away from their shop.

Clement builds a racecourse

One Saturday morning in 1946 when the unsteady posts and rusted wire-netting of the lean-to back veranda at 42 Leslie Street are buried deep beneath a blue hill of wistaria blossoms, Clement Killeaton walks out through the back door and begins to collect small twigs and chips from all round the yard. When he has gathered a small bundle he takes them to the space between the lavatory and the lilac tree. Kneeling, he uses the sides of his hands to level and smooth the fine dirt and gravel. With a piece of brick he hammers the first of the tiny lengths of wood upright into the hard earth. By lunch-time he has marked out an elliptical shape with two straight sides. After lunch he surrounds this with a second circuit of little posts parallel to the first. Late in the afternoon he searches for a longer, regular piece of wood. He chooses one of several likely pieces and drives it firmly into the ground at one end of the straight sides, between two posts of the inner series. As the shadows of the dense suckers of lilac reach the far side of his cleared space, Clement forms loose dirt into a long low mound beside the straight that is marked by the one taller post. Just before his mother calls him inside for the night he scratches with his fingernails in the hard-packed earth at the edge of his cleared place, shaping the first few yards of a road that will lead from the racecourse under the lilac tree, by way of leisurely loops and confusing junctions, past many unkempt shrubs and through tangles of weeds to the farthest corner where the tamarisks lean. He gouges out something that he thinks at first is a lump of gravel. It proves to be a whole round marble that must have been lying in the ground since before the Killeatons came to live in Leslie Street. While Clement is washing the marble at the gully trap, his mother calls him in for tea. He asks who might have owned the marble. She supposes that some boy who lived there before Clement must have lost it or just left it outside and forgotten it until the rain or the dust came and covered it up for all those years. Clement takes the marble to the kitchen window and holds it up against the setting sun. Far

away in the heart of a silvery-white skein that seems to have no beginning and no end is an orange or scarlet glow. Next morning Clement shows the marble to one of the Glasscock boys from next door. The boy says -- yes I remember that ally all right -- it belongs to Frankie Silverstone the big kid that used to live here before you shifted here -- he used to have hundreds of precious allies and that one was his favourite -- if you give it to me I'll ask my mum where the Silverstones shifted to and post it to Frankie. Clement refuses to hand over the marble, but because he is frightened that Silverstone may hear about it he lets the Glasscock boy choose ten allies to keep in return for saying no more about the one that turned up in the yard. Clement spends a long time near the lilac tree, wondering which parts of his yard he ought to build his roads across in the hope of turning up more marbles on the way from the racecourse to the tamarisks.

The people beneath the tamarisks live for racing

One hot day after his racecourse has been built, Clement walks across his backyard towards the corner where the tall horny trunks of the tamarisks curve upwards from lumpy boles. On the lee side of the very last tamarisk, Clement conceals one of the farmhouses he has prepared for the owners of racehorses. The people who first settled years ago on that farm chose the row of tamarisks because someone had told them how of all trees that are famous for their hardiness the tamarisk can endure the fiercest heat and the driest desert soils, and how people who are setting out to cross desert country always know that when they have passed the last tamarisks they are entering the most desolate land of all. The lonely place beneath the tamarisks is the farthest of all farms from the racecourse. The husband and wife who live there look up every day at the brittle green spikes that give no shade or the pink wisps of blossom that they sometimes mistake for dust drifting in from the reddish land farther out. They remember how their grandparents, who must have travelled over great distances, stopped at last at a place from which their children and grandchildren could still look further out but only towards a place that they dared not settle in. If the children and grandchildren wanted to go to live in places even lonelier than the land of the tamarisks, they would have to retrace the journeys of their ancestors, hoping to discover pockets of desert or bush that the first travellers did not notice or perhaps a district that they crossed and marked with roads but which has since

been neglected or forgotten and lapsed back into a wilderness. On the walls of their lounge-room are coloured photographs of the finishes of races. In one photograph a powerful black stallion thrusts his massive head with gaping nostrils and unseeing eyes out from between a bunch of brown and chestnut geldings. High above a confused mass of coloured silken jackets and caps the right arm of the rider of the black horse is raised in what might be a gesture of triumph. The green silk of the sleeve has fallen away from the man's frail wrist. Gripped between his knuckles is a thin whip of dark leather that has curled itself backwards into a perfect arc. The writing under the picture explains that Journey's End, a black horse six years old, was beaten by half a head in the Gold Cup of that year. Late on a summer afternoon the parish priest knocks at the door. Although the day is hot and the house is almost wholly hidden by trees and hedges, the husband and wife are both decently dressed. To show that they have nothing to hide the man lets the priest in at once. The three people soon begin to talk about racing. The married couple tell the priest about the horse named after their property Tamarisk Row. He is the son of the old unlucky stallion Journey's End and they are training him carefully in secret for this year's Gold Cup. The priest reminds them that racing is neither good nor bad, that it neither pleases nor angers God to look down and see His children spending all their time and money in planning to win a big race, that racing is only sinful when people are not content with the joy of seeing their horse get up in a close finish but use their winnings for other pleasures like eating and drinking huge meals in expensive hotels and night clubs or undressing their girl-friends or boy-friends in luxurious houses brought from the proceeds of successful plunges. The husband and wife assure the priest that they take their pleasure only from the racing itself. The husband even suggests that a married couple might get more joy from sharing in the ownership of a promising galloper than from any other pleasure of marriage, but the priest thinks that this would be giving to racing more importance than it really has in God's plan for the world.

Augustine remembers his forefathers

Every afternoon hundreds of years ago a gentle breeze blows misty rain across the many chimneys of the great house whose shape is beginning to fade at last from the silver watch-case in the leather stud-

box in Augustine Killeaton's wardrobe. Augustine's grandfather arrives in Melbourne from Ireland and travels northwards until he reaches a town where the afternoon sun is an awesome orange colour behind the dust from the goldfields. Drunken Scotsmen and scheming Englishmen trick him out of his money just before he dies in a town the miners are leaving for other places where the veins of gold run more truly. Augustine's father straightens his back and looks across grey-green paddocks in south-western Victoria and watches Irish rain drifting in from the ocean. He quarries pale sandstone from a coastal hill and builds within sight of the cliffs that are the southern boundary of his farm a large house whose front gable is copied from one wing of the house in Ireland that his father was supposed to have lived in. Augustine Killeaton at the age of twenty-five still lives in the Western District where he was born. He works on his father's farm on the coast near Kurringbar. He has never tasted strong drink or wanted a girl or been on a racecourse. Each summer when the first north winds arrive he plans a journey in the only direction that has ever attracted him -- north across the miles of grazing lands, then past the sheep and wheat districts, and last through the dusty Mallee to the great inland zone that is coloured orange-red on maps. One morning Augustine sets out to see the annual Cup meeting at the Kurringbar racecourse. All the way from his father's farm to the races he sits tensely in the windy back seat of a neighbour's motor-car, fingering the leafless trees around the silvery house that his ancestors might have gambled away.

Augustine meets a professional punter

After the Kurringbar Cup has been run, many of the dairy-farmers from outlying districts quietly leave the course to be home in time for the evening milking. Augustine Killeaton stays on at the races. His brothers, who have never been to a race-meeting, have agreed to let him off the milking in return for a shilling each from Augustine's share of the wages that their father pays them all each month. Augustine's racing bank for the day is five pounds, all saved from his wages for months past. He makes no effort himself to pick winners, but follows unobtrusively a small group of men from Melbourne. The Kurringbar Cup meeting has attracted many Melbourne stables and their followers, but Augustine has singled out one little band of punters as the smartest of all. He tries to master their trick of

whispering a bet to a bookmaker and then melting into the crowd to avoid being noticed, and he admires their way of watching each race impassively while the crowds around them yell and gesticulate. After the last race Augustine has won nearly fifteen pounds, while the Melbourne punters have won hundreds between them. Augustine walks boldly up to the leader of the band and introduces himself. The punter shakes hands coolly and says his name is Len Goodchild. Augustine says -- I was wondering Mr Goodchild Len if I could be of any use to you and your friends as an agent at Western District meetings. Goodchild thanks him and says -- see me some Saturday at the races in Melbourne. As he walks away, Augustine hears two of Goodchild's men talking. The men call Goodchild the Master. That night when his brothers ask him about the races, Augustine says -- I won a few pounds myself but the Master told me he won a couple of hundred.

Augustine reaches Bassett by way of inland Australia

Augustine visits Melbourne and stands at a discreet distance from Goodchild in the betting ring at Mentone. Goodchild beckons him over and pencils a few faint crosses in Augustine's racebook. One of the marked horses wins. On the following Saturday Goodchild questions Augustine until he satisfies himself that Augustine is not connected with any other racing men in Melbourne or the Western District. A few days later at a country meeting Goodchild asks Augustine to stay out of the betting ring all day because a man that even Goodchild sometimes takes orders from is going to surprise the bookmakers with a cash plunge and the sight of Goodchild's men in the ring might give the game away. Augustine realises he is being tested. He stays all day in the bar sipping lemonade. After the races Goodchild offers him a seat in his car. The other men in the car talk of the hundreds they won that day. Augustine admits to them that he won nothing but he knows he is now one of Goodchild's men. For two years Augustine lives in boarding houses in Melbourne and goes to the races sometimes two or three times a week. About once a month he helps Goodchild to place a commission and the bookmakers accept his bets on credit because they know he is one of Goodchild's men. At other times he backs the horses that Goodchild assures him are fancied by their connections. On mornings when there are no track gallops to watch, Augustine goes to Mass and communion at

St Francis' church in the city. He spends his evenings alone and tells people he has no time to be interested in women. He knows that Goodchild and at least two others of his men are bachelors who still live with their parents. One day Goodchild introduces Augustine to a beautiful young woman who has just become his fiancée. Augustine goes back to Kurringbar for a few days to make sure that his father and brothers do not need his help on the farm. His brothers are surprised that he has managed to live off the races for two years and save nearly a hundred pounds as well. Augustine travels north. One hot day he approaches a small town in the Victorian Mallee. Dazzling silver-white wheat silos rise out of a lake of heat haze. On the edge of the town is a racecourse. The north wind from the far inland flattens the tawny grass between the white-railed fences. Augustine decides that even if his travels lead to nothing he can at least look forward to a day when he arrives at an unsuspecting town with a horse of his own in the float behind his car and a roll of banknotes in his pocket, and goes home again that evening hundreds of pounds richer. He does not know what the name of the town will be, but the horse will be named Silver Rowan after the most conspicuous tree in the pale dripping garden of a mansion that might have belonged to the Killeaton family. A few years later Augustine returns to Victoria from the north. He crosses twenty or thirty miles of plains scarcely different from those that he has crossed for years past. Then he reaches the city of Bassett. He is still nearly 200 miles from his home in the Western District and he knows no one in Bassett. He sends a telegram to someone in the Riverina district of New South Wales. A week later a three-year-old gelding arrives at the Bassett railway station, consigned to Mr Gus Killeaton. The horse from the north and the man from the Western District walk along the unfamiliar gravel footpaths of Bassett towards the loose-box that Augustine Killeaton has rented from a man recommended by the parish priest of St Boniface's. Augustine finds a job as assistant farm manager at a mental home and decides to stay in Bassett until his horse wins a race and earns him enough to return home. He registers the horse's name as Clementia because he is grateful to God for bringing him back alive from the north. He saves the name Silver Rowan for years to come, when he can afford to buy a well-bred yearling from some stud in New South Wales or Queensland. Whenever he looks at Clementia's golden-brown eyes, Augustine remembers obscure stopping-places on his journey north and counts himself lucky that at least he has a young racehorse to show for all his years away from home.

Clementia wins a maiden handicap

Golden balls of dung splash in the dust. A few children stop and stare. Augustine Killeaton, a young man and not yet married, stops and waits while his small black gelding drops his turds in the exercise yard of the Bassett racecourse. Then he bends over and looks into the cracks that have opened in the four flattened spheres. As far as he can see into its bright depths the dung is crisp and fibrous. He reads the dense yellow strands as a sign that the horse is much fitter than even he, the owner-trainer, has suspected. Augustine hands the bridle to his friend Norman Brady who goes on leading the horse quietly round the exercise path. Augustine moves nimbly into the crowd around the bookmakers' stands. He takes out of his pocket two ten-pound notes, which is all the money he has with him. He asks one of the rails bookmakers for five pounds each way Clementia at 25 to 1. He puts the betting ticket and his remaining note into his pocket and turns towards the saddling paddock. One of the last bookmakers that he passes has Clementia at 33 to 1 win only. Augustine asks for the odds to five pounds. With his change of five pounds in his hand he pushes back into the crowd, looking up at each bookmaker's board. Smartly-dressed commissioners, many of them from Melbourne stables, keep up a barrage of bets on the short-priced horses. Augustine hears not one bet laid against his own horse. He finds another board showing 33 to 1 win only and hands over his last note. He waits to see the bookmaker wrench the knob beside the name Clementia. When the man turns the horse's odds down to 16 to 1 Augustine walks proudly away pretending not to notice that a few people are looking curiously at him. He collects the horse and tells Norman Brady that he only had a few bob on him because the odds were so tempting but that he still doesn't think he'll stand a chance having his first start in a race against a smart field of maidens, some of them well backed with Melbourne money. In the mounting yard he looks between the huddles of owners and trainers and jockeys for Harold Moy. A voice says -- here we are Gus. Augustine turns and sees the little man with Chinese features standing conspicuously alone. Augustine and his jockey stand close together looking silently at Clementia's legs. Augustine says -- you know all about him Harold and his weak legs -- I have to try all the time with him in case he breaks down for good -- I've specked him at bolter's odds so you'd better ride him right out if he looks like he's got any sort of a chance -- still if he doesn't go well in the first couple of furlongs drop him right out -- there'll always be some little race up north somewhere that we can save him for one day. Harold says -- I'll look after him Gus -- I won't knock him around. As Augustine hoists him into the saddle

Harold whispers -- I made my wife have three quid on him at thirty-threes -- that's what some of them were betting you know. Augustine says -- I know -- I got a little bit of it myself. His hand brushes Harold's yellow hairless hand and without thinking he squeezes the little man's fingers and pats his smooth wrist. Harold screws up his eyes and looks out at the straight where some of the other horses are already cantering past. Augustine walks alone through the whispering secretive knots of owners and trainers and out of the yard. He finds a place on the crowded slope overlooking the straight and stares towards the line of trees at the far side of the arid racecourse. The whole of the great bare elliptical course wavers in the heat. A bunch of horses crowds against the barrier strands, and the starter pulls his cord. Several horses wheel or shy and miss the start hopelessly. Augustine deliberately sets the muscles around his mouth and scans the field for a sight of Clementia. He looks first at the stragglers then at the main bunch. Near the middle of the field Clementia's colours, emerald green, silver-grey hoops, orange cap, catch his eye. The horse is moving at least as freely as any other. The field bunches on the sharp home turn. Clementia's colours are lost in the ruck. The leader begins to tire. Challengers emerge from the pack. Two horses draw clear. Their riders swing their whips awkwardly and desperately. A confused roar or scream goes up from the crowd as the leaders draw level with the grandstand. Augustine presses his lips together. Absurdly wide on the hard almost grassless track, Clementia feels soft well-watered turf beneath his frail legs. Harold Moy throws himself prostrate in the saddle. His legs twitch frantically behind him. The crowd still screams at the two leaders. Augustine Killeaton does not open his mouth. Clementia passes him, almost up against the outside rail, with little more than the orange cap visible between the heads of the crowd. The leaders pass the post. Clementia is out of sight under the judge's box. The spectators argue among themselves. No one is sure which horse has won. Some people did not even notice Clementia. A number is hauled up over the judge's box. The name Clementia travels fitfully through the crowd. The people around Augustine pronounce it wrongly. Augustine strolls calmly back to the mounting yard and leans on the rails of the winner's stall. The steward has to glance at his racebook to discover Augustine's name. He calls out -- A. C. Killeaton owner trainer isn't it? Augustine nods. Some of the other owners and trainers look hard at Killeaton. He keeps his eyes on the gate through which the clerk of the course is leading Clementia. Harold Moy in green and silver does not smile. One or two people in the crowd clap briefly. Augustine takes the bridle, and Harold slides down from the saddle. He whispers -- I'm sorry Gus sorry -- I should have known how good he was -- Jesus if only we'd known we could have been set up for life.

Harold goes off to the scales. Augustine notices a swelling on the horse's weakest leg. Clementia limps a little on his way back to the stalls. Norman Brady comes running up. He says -- Gus Gus it's a tragedy -- I had thirty bob each way on him -- we'll never get a chance like that again as long as we live. Augustine points to the horse's leg and says -- we mightn't even get another race out of him. Norman takes the proppy horse back to his stall. Augustine finds the first of his three bookmakers. The clerk takes his ticket and counts out 166 pounds 5 shillings. Augustine stuffs the notes into his trousers pocket and keeps his hand around them. He collects from the other two men and then walks to the galvanised-iron lavatory away from the hum of the crowd. He goes into a cubicle and leans against the door. He counts his money slowly and whispers aloud -- 506 pounds 5 shillings. He divides it into two rolls and puts one in each side pocket. He sits down heavily on the toilet seat and starts to make the sign of the cross but instead leans forward and pumps his clenched fists backwards and forwards through the air ahead of him, hissing through his teeth as Harold Moy does when he rides a horse out. He pumps with his hands and jerks his knees until suddenly he sobs just once and a shudder crosses his body. Then he gets to his feet, sets his face into its usual shape, touches the pockets where his money is, and goes outside. That evening, when Augustine and Norman walk the horse down the ramp behind Brady's truck they find him lame and stumbling. Later Augustine visits the untidy weatherboard house on the edge of Bassett where Jean Glossop lives with her parents. A racehorse snorts and scrapes in its straw in a loose-box beneath pepper trees at one end of a trampled dirty yard beside the house. Joe Glossop and his wife only nod to Augustine when he walks into the kitchen where they sit around their wireless set. Jean Glossop takes Augustine out to sit on the broken cane sofa on the front veranda. He tells her the story of the maiden handicap. He persuades her that they now have more than enough money to get married on, even after he has paid his feed bills for Clementia and a few other odd debts to Norman Brady and a bookmaker here and there. They decide to arrange for their wedding as soon as Jean has finished her instructions in the Catholic faith and been baptised. They walk past the horses' sheds and into the small paddock which is all of her father's property. Near a horse trough overhung by faintly rattling kurrajong trees they sit down on short dry grass. Crickets cry not far away. Scattered street lights shine through distant motionless trees. Jean Glossop stretches herself flat on the ground. Augustine half-crouches, half-lies above her. He has waited for years for an event like this and he cannot believe that these few moments on this unheralded evening may be his best chance yet. There is not time to wonder why it is this night and these few yards of meagre grass rather than one of

those many other afternoons on deserted grasslands when he might have made elaborate plans for a triumph that was a fitting reward for all his years of afternoons that came to nothing. The shapes around him threaten to sweep past. When it seems almost too late he throws himself forward and lies like Harold Moy on Clementia, thrusting his hands and knees towards the noise of the crickets. He sees no more of the post as he passes than a blur of white among a throng of his rivals. There is no one to tell him whether or not he has got up to win. He knows that even if he has brought it off he will wonder for years about that other race that was going to bring him all that he could want.

Augustine becomes a husband and father

Each weekend Augustine takes Jean Glossop to the local presbytery to be instructed in the Catholic faith. In the last week before she is to be baptised he takes Clementia to the Bassett racecourse at day-break for his first hard gallop since he broke down after his win in the maiden plate. Clementia tries to jump the long wide shadow of a clump of trees at the back of the course and breaks a leg. Augustine runs to the course ranger's house and brings back a rifle and shoots dead the horse that raced only once for one great win. Harold Moy struggles to unfasten the bridle and saddle from the dead body. Augustine puts one arm around the man's thin shoulders. Harold says -- now we'll never know what he might have been Gus -- what he might have done for us. Augustine says -- I'll take home the bridle and gear at least and keep it hanging in his loose-box -- you never know -- we might get another one half as good as him one day. After Jean is baptised she tells Augustine she feels as if she has a new body of creamy-yellow silk that no one has ever seen or touched. Before she makes her first confession she tells him she might be going to have a baby after what they did that night when Clementia had just won his race, which was the only time they committed that sin together. He explains to her how they can use each day of their married life to do small penances for their past mistakes and to earn treasures of grace for the future. He plans to have a horse in training always. He will potter around the backyard carrying buckets of oats and forkfuls of straw, whistling softly between his teeth to coax the horse to pee or leaning on railings for hours in the quiet sunshine far from the crowds and the dust of racecourses, knowing that each little task in