

# Resistance

## JACINTA HALLORAN



### Praise

'Sublime and affecting, a novel that speaks intimately to both mind and heart.'

**Peggy Frew**

'A taut, delicate record of the ultimate act of listening. Halloran exposes both the knowingness and unwillingness of the human psyche.'

**Jessica Au**

'A daring and richly layered novel that examines the unreliability of conscience and memory, and our own invented truths. A compelling read from a masterful storyteller.'

**Kristina Olsson**

### About the author

Jacinta Halloran is the author of the novels *Dissection*, shortlisted for the 2007 Victorian Premier's Literary Award for an Unpublished Manuscript; *Pilgrimage*, shortlisted for the 2014 Barbara Jefferis Award; and *The Science of Appearances*. She is a former board member of the Stella Prize, and was a GP for many years.

### About the book

As a family therapist, Nina is the ultimate listener. Yet this is of little use with her latest clients, the Agostinos, who have been mandated to see her after stealing a car and disappearing into the outback.

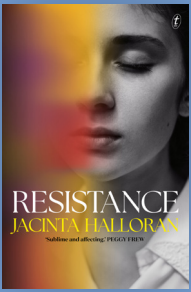
For support with the case, Nina meets with a supervising therapist, Erin. What they unearth

in their sessions goes beyond the Agostino story into confronting personal territory for Nina. Meanwhile, despite her efforts, the Agostinos remain unwilling to speak—so how can Nina be sure that the two children are safe with their parents?

In the tradition of Rachel Cusk's Outline trilogy, *Resistance* is an elegant, hypnotic novel of stories within stories. Examining the unfathomable mysteries within our families, it also questions how we retell our history, both personal and collective.

### Discussion questions

1. In the first line of the book, Halloran writes that 'our lives are written for us at an early age'. Do you agree with this sense of inevitability? If this is true, what lives do you think have been written for Poppy and Theo?
2. 'That which gets our attention is that which we already believe to be true. How then can we ever step outside our experience?' (p. 9) Does Nina ever manage to step outside of her experience, or does she see all of the stories in the book through the lens of what she already 'believes to be true'?
3. What do you think the novel suggests about notions of 'good' and 'bad' parenting?
4. Discuss the ending of the book. What is your response to the story ending before you learn what really happened to the Agostinos? What do you think happened?



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Does it matter?

5. One of the major themes of the book is the relationship between parents and their children and yet Nina is not a parent. Why do you think the author has made this choice? What unique insights or limitations does Nina have as a result of her experience?
6. What do you think the significance of Nina's childhood experience in Marville is? What bearing does it have on the way that she approaches her sessions with the Agnostinos?
7. Melita seems to have a bleaker view of the effectiveness of therapy than Nina does, suggesting that they 'collude' with their clients in the notion that salvation can be found in the clinic rather than out in the world. Do you agree with her position? How do you think Nina feels about it?
8. Who do you think the book's title 'Resistance' applies to? Why?