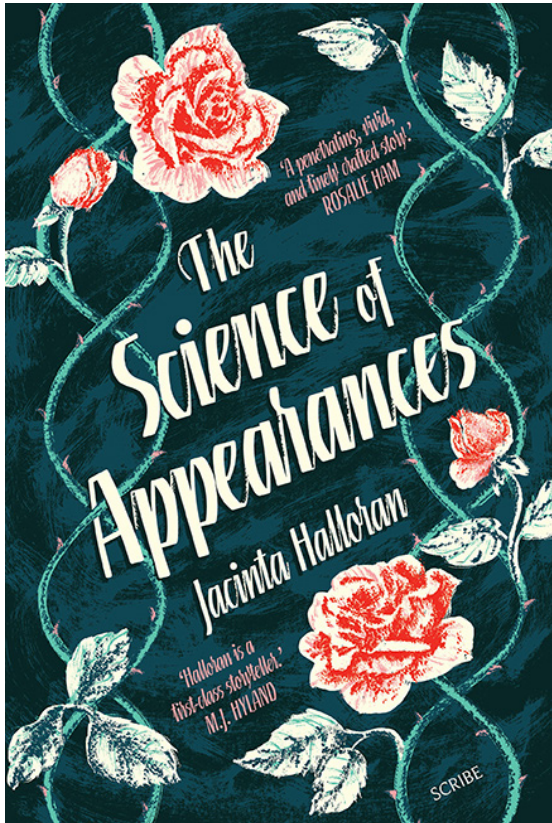


The Science of Appearances

JACINTA HALLORAN



BOOK DETAILS

Format: Paperback
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AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Jacinta Halloran is a Melbourne-based writer and GP. Her first novel, *Dissection*, was shortlisted for the Victorian Premier's Literary Award and her second, *Pilgrimage*, was shortlisted for the Barbara Jefferis Award.

'Their twin gestation held the kind of sickly fascination usually reserved for some gruesome act of nature: a fly trapped in a huntsman's web, a snake swallowing a mouse. Blind little babies, so Mary often imagined, curled up together for nine whole months, their spines aligned, sardine-like. Worst of all, they were naked.'

Thirteen-year-old twins Dominic and Mary have very different natures: Dominic, quiet and serious, is drawn to the natural world, while Mary, a talented artist, is passionate and imaginative. The country town of Kyneton, still grappling with the legacy of World War II, cannot contain her ambitions for a life of creative endeavour.

When their father dies unexpectedly, the reverberations send the two in different directions. Mary escapes to the bohemian haunts of Melbourne while Dominic stays behind, riven by responsibility and an unwavering loyalty to their mother. But the siblings share a special bond, of the kind only twins do, and each struggles with the loss of the other as they begin to carve out new lives. When a secret emerges with the potential to affect them both, will they be drawn together once more?

Set in an era of social constraint and profound scientific discovery, *The Science of Appearances* explores the inexorable pull of the past and the indelible bond we share with those who know us best. Rendered in beautifully evocative prose, this tender, powerful, touching novel shows how the complex interplay of heredity and environment makes, shapes, and sometimes breaks us.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. The nature-nurture theme is very important in this novel. How does it play out in Dom and Mary's lives?
2. How are Dom and Mary different from one another, and why? (That is, are their differences due to nature or to nurture?)

REVIEWS

‘Halloran’s writing is skilled and intelligent, her characters compelling, and her settings rich ... The journey is recognisable but utterly surprising. Insightful and completely absorbing, its resonance lingers.’

ROSALIE HAM, AUTHOR OF THE BESTSELLER *THE DRESSMAKER*

‘I found this novel especially affecting and original ... Halloran is a sensitive writer, who brings intellectual ideas about art and science to the page without sacrificing emotional connection. The novel’s intensity and moral complexity reminded me of Colm Toibin’s *Brooklyn* ... A very impressive achievement. Halloran is in masterly control of her material.’ **CAROLINE BAUM**, BOOKTOPIA (PICK OF THE MONTH)

‘Halloran is a first-class storyteller ... A novel about family secrets, told with pace and power.’ **M.J. HYLAND**, AUTHOR OF THE BOOKER-SHORTLISTED *CARRY ME DOWN*

3. In what ways are Dom and Mary alike?
4. What do you think of Mary’s decision to remain hidden from Dom and her mother?
5. Discuss the role of luck and chance in the lives of Dom and Mary. Does good luck exist, or do good things happen to people for a reason?
6. Why is Mary attracted to Robbie? What does she gain from their relationship?
7. What draws Dom to eugenics?
8. Mary and her mother clash, but are there ways in which they resemble each other?
9. Discuss the relationship between art and self-expression in the novel.
10. Female relationships are an important theme in this book. How do Mary’s relationships with other women influence her?
11. Religion and faith permeate this story in interesting ways. Discuss the ramifications of Catholicism in this novel.



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