9 QUESTIONS WITH CHRISTINE MANGAN

hoopla digital: *Tangerine* is your debut novel and a national bestseller. Congratulations! Can you tell us a little about your journey as a writer and what it was like to have your first novel explode like this?

Christine Mangan: I have always loved writing, ever since I was young. I earned my BA and MFA in Fiction Writing, but despite that, publishing a novel never seemed like something that would or could actually happen. Over the years, I started on a few novels, but eventually abandoned them for one reason or another. Then, when I graduated from my PhD program, I had about a year in which, for the first time ever, I wasn't studying or working, just submitting applications for jobs. I figured if I was ever going to write a novel and send it out, that would be the time—but I never imagined that an agent would be interested, let alone a publishing company. It was all entirely unexpected!

hd: *Tangerine* is optioned for film (again, congrats!); will you be involved in the development? Can you share your thoughts on the prospect of seeing your story on the big screen?

CM: I had a chance to speak with the screenwriter, Abi Morgan, last year and we had a great conversation about the novel and how she hopes to transition it into a screenplay. She's such a talented writer, so I'm excited to see the script that she produces. Again, much like everything with the book, this was a complete surprise!

hd: The story alternated between two first person perspectives in your two protagonists, Alice and Lucy. Can you tell us about the decision to structure the novel that way?

CM: When I first wrote the novel, it was actually structured quite differently. Instead of continually alternating back and forth between the two women, I wrote only one shift, so that the first part of the novel was entirely from Lucy's point of view, followed by the second part, which was entirely from Alice's perspective. In that version some of the tension was lost—there were too many little things for the reader to have to pick up on and remember and it all became a bit too confusing.

hd: What was the hardest scene to write in the novel? What was the most fun?

CM: I think the parts of the book that were the most enjoyable to write were the prologue and epilogue—they came really easily and were among the first things that I wrote.

I don't know if I had a hardest scene to write, but I did have a hard portion to cut—which included taking out an entire third main character that I had written and who ultimately just wasn't working in a novel that was very much about these two women, Lucy and Alice.
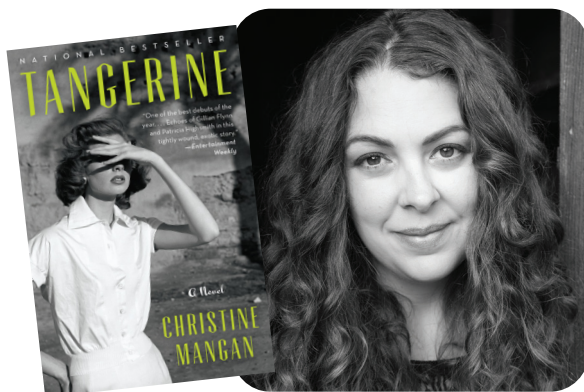
hd: You have a PhD in Gothic literature. Did that background inform the writing of this book? What other influences did you have in writing *Tangerine*?

CM: I've always loved Gothic literature, not just the texts that I read for my PhD work—which were mostly eighteenth-century novels—but authors like Daphne du Maurier, the Bronte sisters, Sarah Waters. I had all of those on my mind when I sat down to write *Tangerine*, which I think is probably most evident in the relationship between Lucy and Alice, and which was inspired by Bertha and Jane, respectively. Through their relationship, I wanted to explore ideas of doubling, of madness, both of which are classic tropes of Gothic literature.

hd: One of the most enjoyable things to many readers, myself included, was the way the setting in Tangier not only comes to life, but reflects, animates, and reveals your characters in different ways. Can you tell us a little about your personal impressions or experiences in Tangier that inspired you to set your novel there?

CM: *Tangerine* was very much inspired and informed by the people that I met in Tangier, the stories that they told me, and all the sights and sounds and tastes that make the city so distinctively unique.

I traveled to Tangier in the spring of 2015. It was actually the second time I had been there—the first time was on a trip to Marrakech where I had taken the overnight train to Tangier, and from there, the ferry back into Spain. I always regretted not actually spending time in Tangier itself, and so in 2015, when I was traveling for a few months following the completion of my PhD, I took the ferry down and stayed for a few days.

Tangier is a city that seems to elicit such a polarizing response from travelers and it's these responses that ultimately first inspired the characters of Lucy and Alice. While some people are happy to get swept up in the chaos of the souks and all that it entails, others find it too overwhelming, too difficult to manage the touts that will inevitably trail you, the sellers that are determined to make a sale, the labyrinthine streets that make up the medina of Tangier. I definitely had moments where I absolutely loved it and couldn't wait to come back, and moments when I wanted to escape the city as quickly as possible. There is a saying about Tangier: you cry when you arrive, you cry when you leave. I found this to be incredibly true of my experience there—all of which ultimately informed what would become *Tangerine*.

hd: Though they are opposites in some ways, Lucy and Alice are both loners before they get locked into their obsessive friendship. What drew you to writing about these kind of outsider characters?

CM: In the end, I think that with this novel what I tried to do was write a story that I would like to read—and those just happen to be the type of characters and stories that I am continually drawn to and which sit on my bookshelf. Anything that follows characters that are somehow on the periphery have always been particularly appealing to me.

hd: What are you reading now?

CM: Eureka by Anthony Quinn. I read his novel Freya the other year and absolutely loved it--and it's been great to see some of the characters from that novel return once again in his new work.

hd: What will we be reading from you next? Anything you can share?

CM: I have a few ideas, but nothing that I'm entirely committed to just yet!