



## An Interview with Author **HOLLY HILL MANGIN**

### Exploring the Paranormal, Crafting Compelling Narratives, and Bridging Worlds Through Literature

Dive into the creative mind of author Holly Hill Mangin as she discusses her fascination with the paranormal, her unique writing process, and the profound impact of her award-winning novels.

**M**eet Holly Hill Mangin, an English literature teacher nestled in the serene landscapes of the south of France. Not just your average educator, Holly is a multi-talented individual, juggling roles as a freelance copy editor and an acclaimed author. Her literary journey has been adorned with accolades, notably, her novel “The House on the Lake” clinching the gold medal

**“Holly Hill Mangin, author of ‘The House on the Lake’ and ‘Within These Walls,’ shares insights into her writing journey and the inspiration behind her captivating narratives.”**

in the 2021 Wishing Shelf Book Awards. But her prowess doesn’t stop there; “Within These Walls,” another gem from her repertoire, made waves as a finalist in the 2021 American Fiction Awards. Today, she invites us into her world, where laughter dances with seriousness, and the line between reality and the paranormal is delightfully blurred. Diving into her novels, it’s evident that Holly’s storytelling is imbued with elements of mystery and the paranormal. With a keen eye for the unexplained, she navigates the realms of ghosts and the unknown, inviting

readers to ponder the mysteries that surround us. In conversation, she shares her fascination with these themes, acknowledging that they serve as gateways to the enigmatic wonders of the world. Drawing from her experiences as an English literature teacher and a meticulous copy editor, Holly masterfully balances her professional acumen with her creative instincts. While her background infuses her narratives with depth and richness, she admits to the occasional tussle between her editing precision and her creative flow, a testament to the intricate dance between craftsmanship and inspiration.

Setting plays a pivotal role in

Holly’s storytelling, with each locale carefully crafted to ensnare characters and readers alike. From the foreboding Lakeview Manor to the haunted corridors of Hillfield Manor, her settings breathe life into her narratives, becoming characters in their own right. Whether inspired by real-life locations or born purely from her imagination, Holly’s settings serve as crucibles for her characters’ journeys.

Beyond the pages of her novels, Holly’s literary endeavors have transcended linguistic barriers, with “The House on the Lake” finding its voice in French. Reflecting on this experience, she acknowledges the subtle nuances that emerge in translation, offering fresh perspectives on her own writing. With “Within These Walls” undergoing a similar transformation, Holly embraces the evolution of her stories across languages, recognizing the opportunity for refinement

and clarity.

Delving deeper into her characters, particularly protagonist Emma Beckett from “Within These Walls,” Holly unravels the intricacies of grief and personal loss. Through Emma’s journey, she navigates the depths of human emotion, weaving a tapestry of vulnerability, courage, and resilience. In doing so, she invites readers to confront their own experiences of loss and find solace in the resilience of the human spirit.

As accolades adorn her literary path, Holly remains grounded, viewing recognition as a validation of her storytelling prowess. Her advice to aspiring authors echoes her own journey: persevere, seek feedback, and trust in the power of storytelling to resonate with readers. For Holly, the journey is as enriching as the destination, and with each word penned, she continues to captivate audiences with her tales of mystery and wonder.

**Your novels, *The House on the Lake* and *Within These Walls*, both seem to incorporate elements of mystery and the paranormal. What draws you to these themes, and how do you approach weaving them into your stories?**

I’ve always had a fascination with the paranormal. I think everyone does, to a certain extent. We all want explanations for things we can’t explain, and even if someone doesn’t believe in the paranormal, these types of stories remind us that there is so much about the world around us that we don’t know. When writing my stories, elements of mystery and the paranormal are at the forefront of my mind. The characters and plot come later. With *The House on the Lake* and *Within These Walls*, it wasn’t until I was finished that I realized both look at different interpretations of ghosts, which I found pretty cool.

**Your background as an English literature teacher and a freelance copy editor must have influenced your writing process. How do you balance your professional expertise with your creative instincts**

**when crafting your novels?**

That’s a difficult question to answer! Friends and colleagues have said, “Oh, when you did (this), it reminded me of (particular novel or play we’ve read or taught).” Consciously, I wasn’t aware I was doing it, but I’m sure on some level, the works I’ve read and taught—and the works I’ve edited—have influenced my writing in some way. There’s always going to be some give and take when crafting a novel. My tendency to prioritize editing, though, often restricts my creativity. I think my stories would be somewhat different had I gone with the flow instead of stopping to rewrite as often as I did.

Both of your novels feature strong settings, from the foreboding Lakeview Manor to the haunted Hillfield Manor. How important is the setting in your storytelling, and do you draw inspiration from real-life locations or purely from your imagination?

I felt the settings in both novels had to be restrictive enough for the characters to interact in the ways they do with their surroundings and with other characters. For *The House on the Lake*, the setting is very important because each room of Lakeview Manor that Eve enters symbolizes something different. As for *Within These Walls*, the significance of the setting lies in the age and size of Hillview. I needed a place big enough to contain a secret room easily overlooked. I had fun looking up floor plans on the internet to make sure both Lakeview and Hillfield made sense as characters roamed from room to room.

**The *House on the Lake* has been translated into French, which is quite an accomplishment. How did you find the experience of seeing your work translated, and did it change your perspective on your writing or your audience?**

Thank you! I live in France and want my French family and friends to have the opportunity to read my stories if they’d like. *Within These Walls* is being translated



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now. I remember being surprised by how my words were interpreted, and in some instances, a direct translation was preferable to me than the original! Writing a story is completely different than editing. There’s definitely more investment when the words are your own, and recognizing that some direct translations were preferable, that’s what changed my perspective on my writing. I realized that some sentences could be tightened or worded differently for clarity. I hope that can be seen in *Within These Walls*.

**Your protagonist in *Within These Walls*, Emma Beckett, seems to grapple with personal loss while delving into the mysteries of Hillfield Manor. How do you approach character development, particularly when dealing with complex emotions and experiences like grief?**

In *Within These Walls*, I focused on creating complex characters, each with his or her own backstory. Although readers may know a little of Emma’s backstory from *The House on the Lake* (the two stories are related but can be read alone), I tried to incorporate experiences and interactions with other characters to illustrate how she gradually learns to confront

her grief and accept her loss. Emma’s journey involves moments of vulnerability as well as moments where she demonstrates courage and determination to come to terms with her loss.

**Winning awards like the gold medal in the 2021 Wishing Shelf Book Awards and being a finalist for the 2021 American Fiction Awards is no small feat. How do you think recognition like this has impacted your writing career, and what advice would you give to aspiring authors seeking similar recognition for their work?**

I was thrilled to be recognized, and I guess, as a writer, I was looking for validation that my stories are worthwhile. I have so many ideas now, and I attribute that, at least in part, to believing in my ability to entertain others.

I’d advise aspiring writers to get their pieces out there. Find an editor (I know one! Haha), beta readers, or critique partners to give you feedback. And don’t let negative feedback deter you. Use it to make your work better. Choose awards that are reputable too. Just know that our stories may not be loved by everyone, and that’s okay. If they speak to even just a few, I think the journey is worth it!