



Richard Thomas

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Transubstantiate

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“They say Jimmy made it out. But the postcards we get, well, they don’t seem...real.”

When an experiment with population control works too well, and the planet is decimated, seven broken people are united by a supernatural bond in a modern day Eden. Most on the island are fully aware of this prison disguised as an oasis. Unfortunately, Jimmy is on the mainland, desperate to get back, in a post-apocalyptic stand-off, fighting for his survival and that of his unborn child. Back on the island, Jacob stares at the ocean through his telescope and plots his escape, reluctant to aid the cause. Marcy tries to hide from her past, sexual escapades that may be her saving grace. X sits in his compound, a quiet, massive presence, trapped in his body by ancient utterings and yet free in spirit to visit other places and times. Roland, the angry, bitter son of Marcy is determined to leave, and sets out on his own. Watching over it all is Assigned, the ghost in the machine. And coming for them, to exact revenge, and finish the job that the virus started, is Gordon. He just landed on the island and he has help.

Transubstantiate is a neo-noir thriller, filled with uncertainty at every portal, and jungles overflowing with The Darkness. Vivid settings, lyrical language, and a slow reveal of plot, motivation, past crimes and future hope collide in a final showdown that keeps you guessing until the final haunting words.

Transubstantiate: to change from one substance into another.

Transubstantiate Details

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Author : Richard Thomas

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From Reader Review Transubstantiate for online ebook

Nicholas Karpuk says

I have a great deal of respect for fiction where the author essentially plants a foot on your ass and shoves you out the door without explanation. Things will happen, exciting things by in large, and you must adapt and figure it out as you go. It's takes a certain kind of guts to even try this, let alone pull it off successfully.

Transubstantiate is chocked full of risk. It's told from multiple, very different perspectives, one of them not even human. It sits at an odd intersection between multiple genres. It doesn't hold your hand through any of it either.

And I read it very fast, because it was all so vivid and exciting. Many parts are almost breathtakingly odd.

You should read this book. It's so hard to summarize that the best description I can think of is, "It's the opposite of boring."

Brandon Tietz says

I also read a pre-publication draft of this book. The bottom line is that Richard Thomas has got the goods.

For a debut, he goes balls out on this one: sizeable cast, jumpy timeline, complex story, but Thomas pulls this off seamlessly without it ever feeling disjointed or convoluted. He doesn't spoon-feed the reader. TRANSUBSTANTIATE will make you think, question, and come up with your own theories about what's happening/going to happen, and I loved that aspect of it.

Regarding the actual writing, this has a Stephen King feel, and that might have to do with the size of the cast and the syntax that Thomas has. Make no mistake, it's reminiscent of King, but Thomas has a voice all his own that is sure to stand out in neo-noir genre he is taking on. The thing that Thomas does very well in direct comparison to King is the economy aspect of storytelling. Thomas doesn't waste a word and doesn't sacrifice any of the on-the-body description or gritty scenery. He paces what could've been a slow and confusing novel in such a way that's easy to swallow and effective. Readers should eat this up.

Thomas has been pitching this book as something akin to "Lost." I agree with that wholeheartedly. Not just because we're on an island with a large cast, but also because Thomas seems to pose great questions in his narrative that just have to be answered by us, the reader, and so we keep pouring through to find those answers. Every character is polished and worth watching. Everyone is connected somehow.

I recommend this to anyone who is a fan of "Lost" or looking to try a different flavor of novel. Great debut. Thomas is definitely a guy to keep an eye on.

-Brandon Tietz

Caleb Ross says

Part mystery, part thriller, part apocalyptic exploration, Transubstantiate offers questions at every page. It's been a while since I've read the book (I read an early, pre-publication draft), but the fact that it stays with me is quite telling.

David Donaghe says

From Otherworld Publications website: "When an experiment with population control works too well, and the planet is decimated, seven broken people are united by a supernatural bond in a modern day Eden. Most on the island are fully aware of this prison disguised as an oasis. Unfortunately, Jimmy is on the mainland, desperate to get back, in a post-apocalyptic stand-off, fighting for his survival and that of his unborn child. Back on the island, Jacob stares at the ocean through his telescope and plots his escape, reluctant to aid the cause. Marcy tries to hide from her past sexual escapades that may be her saving grace. X sits in his compound, a quiet, massive presence, trapped in his body by ancient whispers and yet free in spirit to visit other places and times. Roland, the angry, bitter son of Marcy is determined to leave, and sets out on his own. Watching over it all is Assigned, the ghost in the machine. And coming for them, to exact revenge, and finish the job that the virus started, is Gordon. He just landed on the island and he has help. ..."

Review: I found this to be a spell binding tale filled with twist and turns that left you guessing. I highly recommend it.

David Donaghe
Author of Monroe's Paranormal Investigations
and Tale Spinner.

Roger Sarao says

Six people find themselves in a lone struggle against an alien (computer-generated?) entity known only as "Assigned" who has masterminded the almost complete elimination of human life in order to run God-like experiments on the survivors. Combining elements of neo-noir, science fiction, thrillers and social commentary, TRANSUBSTANTIATE confounds the reader's expectations through a story that is impossible to put down. I took extended lunches and stayed up way too late because of this book. If you're looking for a fresh and exciting voice in contemporary literature, look no further than Richard Thomas's debut novel. You will not be disappointed.

Andrew says

Tran-sub-stan-ti-ate

tr.v. tran-sub-stan-ti-at-ed, tran-sub-stan-ti-at-ing, tran-sub-stan-ti-ates

1. To change (one substance) into another; transmute.
2. Christianity To change the substance of (the Eucharistic bread and wine) into the body and blood of Jesus.

Richard Thomas' seven-voice neo noir thriller borrows heavily from obvious sources (Lost, the Matrix films, Ghost in the Shell, and any number of psychological thriller/horror/sci-fi tropes, but the end result is entirely its own thing. As an examination of seven broken, lost, murderous, Machiavellian, and generally fucked up souls, the mosaic painted at the end is both a rich, detailed thriller that moves with a definite sense of urgency, and a social deconstruction of what it means—and what it takes—to create a utopia.

Using the premise of an experiment in population control spawning a global virus that leaves only a fraction of a percentile still breathing, Thomas uses his seven avatars—the shopkeeper, the nymphomaniac, the exile, the guardian, the vengeance seeker, the mind behind the curtain, and the disgruntled youth—to construct a non-linear narrative that is as much a mystery of what their island utopia/prison represents as it is the whys and wherefores of the seemingly disparate threads that connect the many narrators.

The ghost-in-the-machine/mind-behind-the-curtain concept is nothing new to noir or science fiction, and neither is the last-happy-spot-on-the-ravaged-world setting that may or may not occasionally travel back to the desolate mainland, complete with its semi-mutated, likely drug-addled wanton-rape-and-pillage gangs. Thomas makes these ideas feel fresh, however, by the division of the seven narrators. Through such a tactic, we never get a total sense of omniscience. In essence, we see what we need to see in order to understand why several random individuals might find themselves as mice in a cage for the purposes of an ongoing investigation into social control mechanisms, but not much more than that. The reader is similar to a bird flying over a city, snagging only the bits of story that appear when people walk between buildings, but losing the greater sense of what goes on inside before moving onto the next voice. That's not to the book's detriment—if anything, its slightly-obstructed set of perspectives are what keep it from feeling as if it is something seen and experienced before.

Taken as one, the seven voices of the tale pull together a set of strands that transforms what could have been a very predictable Big Brother-esque plot into a more painterly abstraction of the desire to live in a safe haven, and the ramifications of a single perverted mind that seeks to deconstruct the utopia it has infiltrated. An interesting ride, and a very worthwhile experiment in storytelling if one can get past some rather glaring editorial shortcomings.

Anthony says

Transubstantiate is not an entry-level neo-noir thriller. For a good part of the novel, the real story develops as more of a monstrous, unrelenting backdrop, the great unknown slowly revealing itself as it lurks just behind the text you're presented with, the first person accounts of a handful of individual characters whose lives will become intertwined.

If you like Twilight, then you may as well move on. Or better yet, put that third-grade-writing-level garbage down, pick this one up and try to wrap your brain around something with a pulse.

Simply put, it's a big story. With big themes. And similar to a David Lynch film, you may feel like reading it again to really get it. Thomas has taken a fairly non-traditional format here, utilizing seven first-person accounts to weave the majority of the narrative. And some of them aren't even human. It's like something you might expect from Faulkner, only readable. (Don't judge me, alright, I just hate Faulkner.)

You've got equal parts 2001: A Space Odyssey, Lord of the Flies and A Brave New World with a generous twist of neo-noir served on the rocks, with a post-apocalyptic-wasteland chaser. And I'd recommend slamming it all as fast as possible. The narrative is so taut you may as well turn off the phone and the laptop and dive in, or else come back to it when you can. Few books have this effect on me, fewer still that flirt with the fringes of genre fiction, and so many genres at that.

And don't expect Thomas to give you all the answers here. You're doing the math, as it were, throughout a lot of the novel. Thomas provides just enough pieces to make sense of the world, but with such a well-balanced frugality that you honestly feel like another character, just as vulnerable to what happens next as anyone in the narrative. This is what makes the book so engaging. You're so up close and personal with each character you can't help but be in the story yourself.

Now sometimes this level of parsimony can be rewarding, if not a little daunting (as in Craig Clevenger's *The Contortionist's Handbook* or *Dermaphoria*), other times it can be downright irritating (as in Dennis Johnson's *Nobody Move* (again, don't judge me)); But with *Transubstantiate*, what seems ostensibly like a meager trail of breadcrumbs, at least at first glance, quickly becomes not only fully engaging, it turns addictive. And page after page Thomas delivers, constantly drawing you deeper and deeper into his dark dystopia with a surprising fluidity, teasing the reader with the faintest glimmer of hope on the distant, smoke obscured horizon.

At the end, on the last page, not only do you want to read it again, you want the next chapter, the next adventure, the next book.

With this as a debut novel, I'd say Richard Thomas is a force to be reckoned with.

Paul Eckert says

There's a lot to love about this book.

Mysterious experiment on a strange island? Check.

Multiple characters with distinctive, equally engaging stories? Check.

One non-human character that speaks in computer language that still manages to creep me out? Oh yeah.

The characters in *Transubstantiate* all want the same thing. They want out. What they want to escape from differs from character to character, from the mischevious nympho protecting her son to the man whose struggle seems be his own supernatural capabilities. And even though they are ultimately looking out for their own best interests, they may have more in common than they think. Each character is part of their own compelling story, but each story also manages to build upon the larger mystery that threads through the novel.

Thomas writes in beautiful, noir-ish prose that simultaneously brings scenes to life with visceral clarity while also establishing character and theme. If you love sentences, you'll definitely love Transubstantiate.

I will be reading it again soon, just because it's one of those books that compels you to come back.

Fred Venturini says

Weeks have passed since reading this book, and I still can't shake it. Bold and aggressive, the narrative that jumps among seven voices doesn't nurse the reader along with a standard, unroll-the-plot-in-clear-order delivery. Instead, the soul of his book is dusted off line by line, character by character, chapter by chapter, like the dusting off of an artifact that was there all along.

What does all this meandering from me tell you about the book? Read it. Anything that can remind you of "Lost" and Stephen King's "The Stand" in the same sitting, yet feel starkly original is worth your time.

What excites me most about this book is not even what is on the pages you're about to embark upon, but what Thomas will be capable of in his upcoming work. This is his first novel, and one gets the sense that he will not lose momentum going forward. That "it" factor for writers, much like athletes, is difficult to describe. Some call it "voice" or "style" and try to bottle or define it, but like all greatness, you can't fit a lasso around its neck . . . you can sense it here in many stretches, as Thomas engages all your senses and doesn't mince words as the prose shuttles forth.

Richard Thomas is quite simply, a voice to keep your eye on, and Transubstantiate is a roaring read. Don't miss out.

Jason Kane says

Casual brutality, sex, and disorder: the heroes of noir have never been terribly endearing to the heart, but the seven nihilistic souls of Richard Thomas's Transubstantiate seem like they were born ruined, and are likely to die that way. The story draws heavily on all the beloved accouterments of the neo-noir tradition—fractured narratives; cynicism; disorientation; ruthless beatings—but the story branches out into other areas, exploring themes of mysticism and the unknowable, even broaching the peripheral terrors of Lovecraftian horror.

We follow our seven characters over the course of events in both real time and in flashbacks as they struggle for survival in the throes of exponentially-worsening disasters. If it's bad, it likely gets worse. Most of these people started off as convicted murderers; those were the good old days. There's the man who poisoned his cheating wife (Jacob); the woman whose sexuality seems to lead to someone's death just as often as gratification (Marcy); the ex-cop who carries out murders he considers "just" (Gordon). It all catches up to them, and soon our incarcerated antiheroes are thrown together and given what appears to be a second chance when they are chosen for a rehabilitation program on a remote island—except, it's not a rehabilitation program. It's a shadowy experiment. And how often do those turn out well?

Soon, a virus has swept over the planet, killing off most of humanity. That's not quite the bad news. With the world now in ruins, no one is at the wheel and society has run amok: bloodthirsty tribes and mad dogs roam

the cities, and those not wishing to be killed (or worse) are forced to seek out safety underground. Meanwhile, back on the island, the situation is no less hopeless. Our characters, who have been forced at gunpoint by their captors to run a mock society and play pretend for the benefit of island newcomers, have but two options. Neither is terribly appealing: A) Escape to the mainland, the barbaric state of which they do not fully comprehend, or B) Remain on the island— a paradise, except that it is essentially an elaborate prison camp (hey, at least you can steal a view of the beach— though do so at your own risk), and that the experiment in which they are trapped seems to have become a headless nightmare.

What is happening? The virus, the experiment, the charade on the island; is someone watching it all transpire, pulling the strings? That may be the character known as Assigned. The chief antagonist, Assigned's narrative thread is largely represented by nothing but a chilling readout of computer language and script logs; an abandoned program grown sentient, or something worse. Assigned is watching every move that's made on island, but who (or what) is it? A program gone haywire, or the tangible shard of some alien consciousness? Was mankind in collusion with dark forces? The character known as X seems to have an idea. In fact, he may even have been one such force; a manipulative mystic, spiritually (but not morally) enlightened, possibly inhuman, and acting as something of a psychic warden at the behest of those running the experiment. Willingly, of course. X is furthering his own agenda; this makes him somewhat detached from the plight of mankind, despite that he's probably the best shot it now has for survival. His powers are shamanistic in nature— mental projection, healing, divination. His true motives are unclear. Is X an agent for humanity's evolution, or the harbinger of its collapse?

Though the plot is a veritable straitjacket of mysteries, the telling is lean, even spare: this book is brisk, wicked, and blood-soaked. In fact, the story reads much like a 200-page climax— Thomas's writing is always on the move, always frantic, surging forward essentially without pause, all while maintaining an intricate weave of narrative threads with deceptive ease. Our heroes may play to a familiar type— they are selfish avengers, benumbed by blood and tragedy into a final, jagged archetype of skewed morality that goes unchallenged by even the most earthshaking developments— but the backdrop of sci-fi pulp keeps everything fresh and unpredictable: otherworldly shock troops materialize out of thin air. Teleportation devices lie hidden in caves. Microchip implants. Ancient relics. Anthropomorphic animals. There is, in fact, a sense that the plot machinery of *Transubstantiate* runs deep, and has likely ground up many lost souls before these. In a way, this validates its corrosive noir cynicism. The story's true depth and scope are likely known only to X, and he's not exactly the sharing type. And so the cause of it all lies largely outside the reach of the unenlightened.

Still, the theme of biological evolution appears more than once during the course of the story. It's suggested that human potential has not been reached, and it's implied that the powerful X may be using the island and its inhabitants to engineer his own Eden— a vision of the future of humanity, of what it could become. If that's the case— if these survivors are destined to evolve— let's hope they learn to control their ids a bit. As it stands, it seems like one X per planet may be enough.

Greg McCarthy says

Richard Thomas knocks it out of the park with his debut neo-noir thriller. Seven characters roam a post-apocalyptic island in this one-of-a-kind ride, searching for absolution, redemption, or just plain survival.

Part Bradbury, part Cormac McCarthy, part *Lost*, *TRANSUBSTANTIATE* takes the reader on a careening,

zig-zagging trek to a dizzying conclusion, and Thomas takes us inside the head of each character with unique first-person narratives from the viewpoint of all seven. Vivid imagery, violence, fear, and lust—*TRANSUBSTANTIATE* has it all.

When I finished, I could picture Thomas with a wicked grin and a glint in his eye, waiting to unleash another story on his readers. Big things are in store for Richard Thomas.

Aaron says

A book that tries to bring together a lot of disparate elements, what *Transubstantiate* has in ambition does not make up for its short comings in execution. It seems like this book was self-published so expecting a veteran editor there helping to shape the book is too much. However, Thomas could have at least run some grammar checker on it to keep the typos from accumulating until sentences started to evoke *News Radio's* Super Karate Monkey Death Car episode where a book is translated into Japanese and then back into English. There really are too many sentences like "Jimmy, who don't you tell them what you're doing right now." And then there are minor details like the disaffected youth in 2018 who shows his rebellious streak by tagging "Metallica" and "Nirvana", which seemed so wrong I assumed I had misread the date on the chapter header. But no, the book's flash back to six years into my future is filled with already beyond-sell-date cultural references. These seem like minor gripes, but if there are going to be so many moving parts, it helps for them to be welded together well.

Also, weirdly, in a book that runs 200 pages where questions like "why is there a talking squirrel?" or "how are half of these 'mysteriously linked' characters actually linked?" remain unanswered, Thomas spends two pages talking about what an amazing a writer Chuck Palahniuk is.

Therefore, it's not that surprising that the portrayal of women in this book is, uh, interesting. One of the women is written like the never-satisfied one-dimensional nympho usually only found in particularly underambitious porn. I assumed there was going to be some sort of twist where it was revealed that she was suffering from some massive brain lesion a la Kluver-Bucy syndrome in a way that would establish her as a real character, forcing the reader to reconsider their expectations of "realistic" writing. Nope, although she uses tantric magic at the end, so I guess that was that.

I did like the book's structure, as it was something I'd never seen before. It just wasn't sufficient to get me to ignore all the flaws.

Giovanni Gelati says

I decided to start our new Sci-Fi/Paranormal postings a week early. I had gotten a hold of Richard Thomas's *Transubstantiate* and had to give it a go. I thought I was on an awesome roll; let's keep the momentum going. Disappointment was not to be had and Thomas kept the ball rolling right along for me. The definition of the title *Transubstantiate* is to change from one substance to another. With a word that big I was expecting something longer, but hey, what do I know?

The novel is to be released June 18th, 2010 and is billed as a neo-noir thriller. One thing it can't be seen as is

boring. The futuristic setting comes vividly to life as Thomas takes us into the future to a place I don't think many of us would like to be. The attention to detail puts us front and center into this strange place he has created, a modern day Eden.

Transubstantiate takes us on the journey of seven different people fighting for their survival on a post apocalyptic planet. Thomas crafts a unique plotline that keeps us guessing to the very end. The characters are engaging, the action is taunt and the pressure builds to the very end, keeps us on the edge of our seats. Check out this novel, at the very least put it in your Goodreads – to read – list and place it at the very top. Remember, June 18th, Transubstantiate drops; be on hand to catch it.

What are you reading today? Check us out and become our friend on Facebook. Go to Goodreads and become our friend there and suggest books for us to read and post on. You can also follow us on Twitter. Thanks for stopping by today; we will see you tomorrow. Have a great day.

Simon West-Bulford says

Okay, so there may be some bias from me in considering this novel. Having seen the early draft and being privileged to see this develop, I was thrilled to see it get published, but I remember reviewing it, looking forward to reading each chapter, and dreading whatever fate was in store for the seven characters. I was eager to get my hands on the final glossy product so that I could enjoy the whole story all over again. And enjoy it I did.

There's no escaping Thomas's fond nod to "Lost" or "The Prisoner", not least because you have to have your wits about you to keep on top of the plot, but the story has all the grit and darkness of the neo-noir genre he so obviously loves, and it marries that style neatly with the science-fiction element that always appeals to me.

The story is complex and not explained fully by the end of the novel (in keeping with Lost!), but the important aspects have a satisfactory resolution and I think that full disclosure would spoil the mystique he generates through the gradual unveiling of the characters.

I can imagine various readers have their own favourites out of the seven emerging personalities, though I believe the dominant number one would most likely be the enigmatic "Exodus" or "X" for most. For me, it was the mysterious character known only as "Assigned" – the ominous watcher with distinct echoes of HAL 9000 but somehow incorporating somewhat organic roots. How can you not be intrigued or wary of him... it!?

Overall, Transubstantiate offers a well-constructed and satisfying story that's worthy of being Otherworld's debut novel. Well done, Richard!

Craig Wallwork says

For me, and a few other writers who know Richard, Transubstantiate seems like the novel been around almost as long as we've known Richard. That's not to say it was written a long time ago, quite the contrary. No, it's through his enthusiasm and passion, energy and love for this novel, that Richard has ingrained Transubstantiate into my psyche forever.

By far one of the most uncompromising and determined writers around, Richard is gifted at prose as he is sincerely gracious. It's sickening, if the truth be told. With a very envious publishing career where he was the winner of the ChiZine Publications 2009 "Enter the World of Filaria" contest, and his short story "Maker of Flight" was chosen by Filaria author Brent Hayward and Bram Stoker Award-Winning editor Brett Alexander Savory, not to mention having a story published in Cemetery Dance, I can't help but feel inspired.

It'd be wise to see Transubstantiate as more the hors d'oeuvre before the main banquet, an appetizer of such allure it will make your mouth and stomach ache. It is the first of many, and the one that marks the beginning of a publishing career that will outlive most of us.

To whet your appetite, here is the official synopsis:

A neo-noir transgressive thriller about a man who has taken himself off the grid and punishes those that the law has overlooked or failed to prosecute. Altered and breaking apart, he follows orders while questioning the reality and motivation of those people that are in his life. A dark past filled with tragedy looms over him while he tries to embrace the ghost of Holly, his only female connection, under orders from Vlad, while taking care of his bedraggled cat, Luscious. At what point does he just end it all? Or does he stay in his role as judge, jury and executioner for the rest of his life?
