



Transcendence

C.J. Omololu

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When a visit to the Tower of London triggers an overwhelmingly real vision of a beheading that occurred centuries before, Cole Ryan fears she is losing her mind. A mysterious boy, Griffon Hall, comes to her aid, but the intensity of their immediate connection seems to open the floodgate of memories even wider.

As their feelings grow, Griffon reveals their common bond as members of the Akhet—an elite group of people who can remember past lives and use their collected wisdom for the good of the world. But not all Akhet are altruistic, and a rogue is after Cole to avenge their shared past. Now in extreme danger, Cole must piece together clues from many lifetimes. What she finds could ruin her chance at a future with Griffon, but risking his love may be the only way to save them both.

Full of danger, romance, and intrigue, *Transcendence* breathes new life into a perpetually fascinating question: What would you do with another life to live?

Transcendence Details

Date : Published June 5th 2012 by Walker Childrens

ISBN : 9780802723703

Author : C.J. Omololu

Format : Hardcover 336 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Paranormal, Young Adult, Romance, Urban Fantasy, Supernatural, Science Fiction, Time Travel

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From Reader Review *Transcendence* for online ebook

Rose says

Initial reaction: "*Transcendence*" had many elements that intrigued me - mystery, suspense, romance, loose ties to Egyptian lore, a decent time travel story, and nice characterization. It does start a little sluggish with setting the pieces and people in the story in place, but once the story finds its stride, it doesn't let go. I really enjoyed the relationship between Cole and Griffon.

Full review:

"*Transcendence*" is one of the stronger YA fantasy/time-travel stories I've read in a while. Granted, it's not a pitch-perfect story - it has a fair share of times where it stumbles along with its toggle between the past and present. Yet, I think what makes this story so appealing are the characters, the loose parallels of Egyptian lore, and the overall intrigue of how the mysteries established come together.

Nicole (Cole) is a young woman who travels to London with her elder sister Kat and begins to have distinct visions of a past which feels familiar, but out of reach. During one of the spells she takes while watching a frightening scenario of the past, Cole's helped by Griffon, a boy who seems friendly but seems to suspect Cole of her ability.

As luck would have it, the two meet again in Cole's hometown and things become more complex the more that Cole sees Griffon. The visions become more vivid/frequent, and Griffon seems to be the only one with the answers that Cole needs. The two become close as they learn about each other and discover that Cole's visions are of the past - of her reincarnated past as an Akhet. Those visions are pieces of a greater puzzle that will lead Cole looking for the answers, because they may be a stand against the danger that's facing both Cole and Griffon - to their relationship and their lives.

I think the biggest aspect I enjoyed about this novel were the characters and how they interacted. Well done to Omololu for creating a racially diverse cast of characters that are rounded and realistic for what the story shows. Cole's a good protagonist to follow - she's inquisitive and while she does tend to stumble a bit in her pursuits, I think overall she stands well in telling her story and not being a "damsel in distress" like a lot of YA heroines tend to be. Griffon is very sweet, a friend to and coming to the defense of Cole, though he carries some heavy secrets of his own. I liked him a lot. Cole and Griffon's developing relationship is genuine and natural in its progression.

It is a fun journey to see some of what the Akhet's roles are and what their abilities lend. It's lightly drawn, but the worldbuilding/lore is enough to provide intrigue for the realm it establishes.

I think it took a little while for the story to build up to the point where it hit the ground running and steamrolled to the end. Some might find the historical flashbacks jarring at first because of the particular characters and shifting, but it evens out as the story goes along, and makes sense as the pieces are put together in the Akhet's lives. I didn't see one significant twist coming towards the end and that I thought was well portrayed for what it was. The tension towards the end was well played, and brought to a satisfying conclusion that manages to tie the major threads the story establishes, though admittedly there were a few things I would've liked to see evened out and perhaps had a little more connection to the characters that were shown in the flashbacks.

Overall, "Transcendence" is a refreshing YA fantasy/time travel story with elements of mystery, suspense, and romance that's an engrossing read. I'm definitely looking forward to seeing where the author takes the sequel when it comes out next year (2013).

Overall score: 4/5

Note: I received this as an ARC from NetGalley, from the publisher Bloomsbury/Walker Books for Young Readers.

Jessica (Stuck in Books) says

Transcendence was so much better than I expected it to be. I had been putting off reading it for a really long while now, so I decided I should read it. Now I'm so glad I did. I read this book in something like 24 hours. I started it Saturday night and finished it Sunday night -- Mothers Day! It was intriguing and sweet and just something I couldn't help but keep reading. It was practically glued to my hands throughout the duration of last weekend.

At first glance, this book seems to be just one of those books where people keep reincarnating and finding their true love and fighting to be together and fighting against the evil of the galaxy and everything else and blah blah blah. A run-on sentence-worthy story. But that is NOT -- not not not -- what this book is. I have to say, it certainly puts a different spin on the whole angle of reincarnation (which was nice because I always enjoy a good reincarnation story). The aspects of the story that were involved in being born again and again were interesting. I didn't feel like a bunch of information was randomly being thrown at me to store in my brain for a later event in the book. Instead, the facts came gradually and in a natural way that was truly enjoyable to read and learn about. There are also some things that are not fully described, but I could figure out myself, which was great because I like getting explanations, but not to the point where I am treated like an imbecile. I DO have a grain up there that I try to use on a regular basis. So score for C.J. on that front.

Character rundown time! First we have Cole. The astounding cellist. The shy girl. The female lead with OCD tendencies who also possesses a few nerd-ish qualities. But then there's the strength in her that is beneath the surface throughout everything. And the determination that pops out when it needs to. Confidence in herself which is always a trait I admire in anyone. So, I liked Cole. Honestly and truly, the character of Cole made me happy. Next we have Griffon. OH GRIFFON. Attractive, attractive boy. While he IS most attractive, he also has brains. More brains than any average boy nowadays could possibly attain, to be honest. (I am not insulting the male race with that, just stating a fact -- read the book if you really want to understand!) I love Griffon's special little abilities. Some made me last and others just amazed me. Throw this all together, and we have a strong, wonderful character that I ADORE.

I have to comment on SWEETNESS yet again. This book was stock-full of sweetness! From the moment Cole and Griffon met to the very last page, great things were happening in some form or another. Plus, they made a cute couple that was not hard to believe in. They did some ordinary things--mixed in with WHOA things, of course--and that added a realistic quality to them in the midst of a whole bunch of paranormal-reincarnating things. Another good thing was how Cole and Griffon met. It wasn't overplayed or unbelievable. It was something that could actually happen to any of us, anywhere. I liked not having to go

along with some big, extravagant meeting scene between the love interests for a change.

The ending. There is going to be a sequel, so of course there's some wanting left over. BUT the main plot in this particular book was played out in full, so that appeased me. The ending did not make me unhappy in any way, nor did it leave me with my jaw hanging open. It left me smiling. And now I am immensely eager to read the sequel! Which I am surely going to have to wait forever and a day for. *sigh* Oh well. Until then, I'll drool over what we got of Griffon so far in this book. :)

I recommend this book to anyone who likes the paranormal romance thing. Especially where the romance is prominent, but not necessarily instant. All in all, this book was a great read and I feel lucky to have gotten to read Transcendence! Good books never fail to make me happy.

Mundie Moms & Mundie Kids says

A captivating storyline with plenty of romance, mystery, historical references, suspense and reincarnation. Transcendence introduces readers to an incredible world, fascinating characters and a unique story line. I've not read a lot of YA books that tackle reincarnation, and I was really surprised with how much I enjoyed C.J.'s story. I found it to be an incredibly intriguing, fun read. I didn't think this would be a story that I would get as swept up in as I did, and I really enjoyed it.

Being a fan of history, I loved the way past connects the characters now days. Their ties to each other, and glimpses into various moments into the past lives of Cole was well written, and interesting. There's a part of me that thinks it would be awesome to be able to remember past lives, and to have been alive during key events during history, than there's another part of me that feels that it would be daunting to remember all those lives, similar to how Cole first felt when she came into her powers. Cole, also known as Nicole was a fun character to get to know. I felt like I understood her freaking out over the various flashbacks she has, though she has no idea why she's having them at first and why. The more glimpses I got, the more I wanted to know what her past lives.

The other character I adored, who also shares the spotlight with Cole is Griffon. This boy doesn't just hold secrets into Cole's past lives, but he's that perfect gentleman who's always been a part of Cole's lives. I loved that while there was an immediate attraction and connect felt, which made perfect sense, there was a well paced build up to the romance the develops between the two. Griffon is so patient with Cole, and he does everything he can to help her grow into her powers and accept what she is and what she can do. I loved seeing how Cole was able to start trusting in him as well as fall in love with him. Griffon has always played a big role in Cole's lives, and I loved the role he played now.

Another thing I liked about this story is the way C.J. explains how reincarnation would effect a person now days. She created a realistic back story and made her book's reincarnation creditable with the history behind what Cole and Griffon are. They are what the Egyptian called Akhet's, meaning a people who can remember past lives they have lived before that can span hundreds to thousands of years. While both Cole and Griffon are both teens now, in past lives they could be different ages. She made it feel more realistic with knowing they would have relatives who are still around, despite the ages of some of the characters. C.J.'s vivid world building and writing was well paced, and really brought her story to life by giving it that realistic touch. Her

descriptions, and her reasoning for why things happen was well executed and one of things that made this book so enjoyable for me.

Shaheen says

While I enjoyed *Transcendence* and it certainly kept me entertained, there are ultimately too many things I didn't like about it to really proclaim it an instant favourite. I think the past-lives, reincarnation aspect is handled well (and ties to Egyptian mythology are always a plus), but the characters and the plotting could have been much, much better.

We begin with the world-building, wherein everyone reincarnates, but only a special few, called Ahket, remember their past lives. The awakening, or transitioning, is marked by random flashes of traumatic or emotional events witnessed in ones past lives. When our protagonist, Nicole (Cole) begins to have these visions, she's convinced she's going crazy, or is very unwell. Lucky a random stranger named Griffon is there to help her through it. This aspect of the book is interesting, and quickly pulled me into the book. The more that Cole found out about Ahket, the more I wanted to know. Getting to meet other Ahket is exciting, and I hope that as the series goes on, more is revealed about the world and the role the Ahket play in it.

My main source of disappointment in *Transcendence* is the execution - it's somewhat clumsy and unsatisfying, and left me with the feeling that the protagonist is ten kinds of foolish. For example, Cole, freaking out that she's experiencing weird visions, and confronted with Griffon who seems to know more than he lets on about them, instantly trusts him. Even when common sense tells her not to, she's constantly telling the reader how much she innately trusts him. Which would be fine, albeit unbelievable, if she didn't, in the same breath, tell us how she thinks he's crazy for believing the reincarnation stuff. She listens to his theories, meets other Ahket he knows and humours them on their beliefs, but it's a dodgy fortune-teller that eventually makes her believe! Go on Cole, tell me again how you trust this random boy ...

Closely connected, then, is the romance that transpires between Cole and Griffon. It's sweet and cute and oddly satisfying to read about, but Cole quickly becomes one of those YA protagonists that needs every consequence and corollary spelt out for her. She lacks the ability to even think one step ahead, is always angry and upset when the painfully obvious is pointed out to her. In addition, after sixteen years of fierce independence, she completely melts down when a guy doesn't call/text her for a few days. She became disgustingly clingy, which didn't seem natural for the character that the author described pre-Griffon.

(view spoiler)

On the subject of Griffon, he came across as too perfect. Where are his faults? His psychological hang-ups, the emotional and mental trauma of remembering so much, of having lost so much? I think the level of perfect that Griffon maintained throughout the book is probably what irked me the most. In terms of secondary characters, the author does admirably, creating believable, caring parents, a spunky sister, and an awesome best friend, but I wish these characters had more life. I feel like the author really only pulled them out when the plot needed to be advanced in some way, and they were otherwise left to rot in the back corners while Cole gallivanted around with her beau.

So, overall, where *Transcendence* failed me is how, I think, the author chose to approach it. In writing for a young adult audience, perhaps it seemed wiser to over-explain everything, to heighten every feeling to the point of melodrama, to create a 'relatable' main character who's middling, average, unremarkable, aside from

her Cello playing, can't wear heels, doesn't wear skirts and throws away her life's passion for love. I, however, have read too many books where the world-building and plot elements are watered down, where the protagonist is stereotypical to a fault, to find anything I loved about it.

A copy of this book was provided by the publisher for review.
You can read more of my reviews at [Speculating on SpecFic](#) .

Constance Burris says

Great Mature YA Read

Great Mature YA Read. Highly recommend. I usually like my YA with more action, and there were spots that seemed a bit slow. But overall it was a great read and full of surprises.

Meaghan says

I will admit that when I was first approached about this book I was a little hesitant. The historical element made me a little nervous. Since I have been blogging I have learned that I am not a historical girl and I did not want to accept a book to review that I would not end up enjoying. I read a little more about it online and was really intrigued by the whole idea of past lives I so decided to give it a try anyway. I am very happy that I did give this book a chance, because while there are historical elements in it, the story itself was really interesting and I ended up really loving this book.

I have been reading a lot of paranormal lately that focuses on some kind of paranormal creature, like vampires or werewolves. Therefore, it was really refreshing to dive into a novel that had nothing to do with any of those things. I have read about reincarnation and past lives in other books, but I really liked Cynthia's spin on it in *Transcendence*. I especially enjoyed experiencing some of Cole's past lives memories alongside her. She gets very small snippets, but I liked trying to piece all of them together to understand what kind of life she had in the past. These past memories also help shape her present life and mold the type of person she is becoming.

The romance in this book was very sweet and I connected with Griffon and Cole immediately. They do move a little fast and I know that can bother some readers, but it worked for me. I think that remembering their past lives has matured them so when their relationship moved quickly it made sense to me and was easy to accept. The two of them do have quite an interesting history and as they get to know each other all of it slowly clicks into place. I love how Griffon treated Cole like she was a gift to be treasured.

As for the story, I loved that Cynthia did not take time filling the pages with lots of description about the scenery, but instead focused on advancing the plot itself. I don't like filler materials in novels and appreciated Cynthia concentrating on what was important and that was Cole learning about her abilities. The plot moved forward at a fast pace and I was glued to the pages from start to finish.

The mystery in the story was trying to decide who Cole could trust and who was out to cause her harm. I did riddle out who the villain was long before she did but I still enjoyed watching her try to decode all the information she had unloaded onto her. While I saw the clues, she was very distracted by everything that was

happening to her and could not fit all the pieces together right away. She did not make poor choices, she was just not sure who she could trust or turn to when she needed help. While it did take her longer to figure out what was going on, I still really enjoyed this aspect of the book.

Overall, *Transcendence* is a promising start to a new series. It had a little bit of everything, mystery, romance, interesting topics to explore and kept me engaged the entire time. I loved the writing style and was emotionally invested in the lives of Cole and Griffon. I know there a sequel that is due to release next year and I will be eager to get my hands on it! I would recommend this to someone looking for a good young adult paranormal read that leaves all the creatures behind and explores reincarnation and how knowing your past could affect everything about your future.

Stephanie Cowart says

I received a copy of this book from the publisher via Netgalley.

This is a fantastic book! I'm so glad it's got a sequel because I definitely want more of Griffon and Cole!

I was hooked from the first chapter that describes Cole and her sister Kat on a Spring Break trip to London. That's where Cole starts having disturbing visions and she meets Griffon for the first time.

When she returns home to San Francisco and the visions continues, Cole thinks she's going crazy. She reconnects with Griffon and he helps her to understand what is going on with her.

The evolution of Cole's understanding and acceptance of who she is as an Akhet was perfectly paced. She was of course shocked and skeptical but grew to trust Griffon and his explanation. Through this their relationship progressed. That was also done flawlessly, with Cole having to overcome her own normal teenage insecurities to pursue a relationship with this unique guy.

The rogue Akhet storyline was good but one that I figured out early on. Although there weren't any shocking surprises, I was still riveted and anxiously awaited the final resolution.

A chance meeting between Cole and one of her sister's co-workers sets the stage for book two. Thankfully this one doesn't end on a cliff hanger but I am excited to see how this latest plot wrinkle will be explored in next year's book, *Fated*.

This is an exciting new series and I'm excited to read more from C.J. Omololu!

Kimbayya says

So i won this book for free through the giveaways here on goodreads. I had never heard of the author before so I had not idea what to expect. But boy i wasnt disappointed!

The plot of the story was wonderful. The way it was played out made sense but also kept you wondering and interested. The romance between Cole and Griffon was beautiful, how they just seemed to click. It was a different type of story, fresh and new, which is what I liked so much about it. I think that in some parts it should have elaborated more on the snippets of past lives that Cole was seeing just to give us more of a look into what was happening. I am also very curious to see where this whole thing with Drew goes too. I hope that it gets elaborated on and we get to see the story behind it!

Besides Griffon and Cole (who I loved.) One of my favorite characters was Rayne. She was quirky, different and funny. Shows that it is always nice to have a friend that actually understands (or at least pretends to.)

Now Cole she was a very gifted Cellist, but always wondered why it seemed to natural to her. Why she was seeing these things all a sudden. She thought she was going crazy. But through everything she tried to keep a level head and do it on her own. A very good female lead.

Then Griffon comes along, all strong, smart, knowing how to help and falling in love with her. He was a sweet character. By reading you could somehow feel how much he cared for her. He was also very protective and just wanted them both to be safe.

Over all I loved the book. I personally can not wait until the sequel comes out, as I will for sure be buying it!

BAYA Librarian says

This novel has an interesting paranormal concept that plays out in a disconnected, melodramatic plot with forgettable characters. It may appeal to younger teens who still love vampire stories, or are bored of vampire stories but still want that romance-between-beings-with-eternal-life thing. It may also interest readers interested in the concept of reincarnation.

San Francisco high school student and cello prodigy Cole Ryan is visiting the Tower of London during summer vacation when she is overcome by an intense first-person vision of an Elizabethan-era beheading on the spot she is standing. As she starts to lose consciousness a handsome teen (who coincidentally lives in Berkeley, CA) swoops in and prevents her from swooning to the ground. Later Cole and Griffon reconnect in the Bay Area and he eventually explains to Cole that they are both "Akhet", people who remember all their past lives. Akhet are supposed to use their accumulate lifetimes of knowledge to do good in the world, but as Cole begins to be dangerously aware, some Akhet are rogue and spend their current lives seeking revenge for harm done in past lives.

Throughout the book Cole struggles to accept that she is an Akhet, to negotiate her romantic feelings for Griffon, and to avoid conflict with rogue Akhet who blame her for a past tragedy.

Despite its cool premise, both the concept and the plot have way too many holes. For example, none of the Akhet know how or why they are reborn and can retain their memories, or why it takes awhile for Akhet to regain their memories or why other "regular" people never remember their past lives. Perhaps the author wanted there to be a spiritual mystery instead of hard and fast reasons - just like in real life. This is a fair narrative choice, but it does feel like a bit of a cheat.

There are also a lot of plot holes and lazy plot construction: the most glaring example is Griffon's maddening behavior of telling Cole, "I can't explain right now" anytime she is confused about why she is having flashbacks of the past or wants to know more about why he is rushing off somewhere. It also takes far too long for Cole to find out she is Akhet, which is frustrating since the book jacket lets us know what the deal is up front, which makes Griffon's evasiveness even more irritating.

This book has a bit of a Twilight feel because of the similarities between Akhet and vampires: for both there is eternal life and the irony of being one age in body and another in one's mind and life experience. At one point Griffon tells Cole that he feels it's kind of creepy to look seventeen but be to actually be hundreds of years old when he is flirting with high school girls. And like Edward in Twilight, Griffon is in the protective (perhaps overly protective) role while Cole takes on Bella's damsel-in-distress role.

In general, none of the characters were all that interesting or memorable, which is disappointing because Akhet are supposed to be so special and almost like superheroes, but in the book their role as do-gooders comes off vague at best.

It is certainly great that the lead romantic male is of mixed-race origins, and that the cover does not attempt to whitewash his ethnicity, and it is also great that the writing is "clean" enough for younger teens to enjoy. But readers who are beyond Twilight-like plotting and characters may give this one a pass. For those who do enjoy this book, a sequel is planned for 2013.

Sophie says

Ich bin begeistert! :) Die beiden Hauptcharaktere sind echt toll und die Handlung sehr spannend. Manchmal haben mich aber Coles Reaktionen ein wenig verwirrt. Ich freue mich auf den nächsten Band!

Andrew says

The concept and characters for this story are very intriguing and quite unique. At the beginning we meet Cole, or Nicole, a girl who's visiting London with her sister and father. She begins to have these sort of 'visions' and eventually it's too much for her and she faints, falling into the arms of a boy we later find out to be Griffon.

Moving along a few weeks, she believes these visions have stopped. Unfortunately for her they haven't and who does she find is living in the same place as her around the time the visions start to happen? The one and only, Griffon.

Griffon is just like her. It turns out these 'visions' she's been having are other lifetimes, lifetimes she has lived. People who are able to recollect these memories are known as Akhet and most of these individuals are reincarnated in order to fix the earth so that they and other humans and animals can live on.

However just as there's good Akhet's, there are also bad ones. Obviously. These are known as Rogue Akhet's who usually only come back to right the wrongs that are done to them in past lives, to have revenge and one of those rogues is after Cole.

Together, Cole and Griffon try to figure out who and why, hopefully before Cole gets badly hurt or worse.

This beautiful story is wild from start to finish and mixes in so many genres from adventure to action to romance. It's left me wanting more. And I'm so thankful there's a sequel.

Sarah says

At first I wasn't sure what to think, I was sucked in but started to dislike Griffon pretty much right away. I thought this book had the making of a beautiful disaster, but yet again, I was wrong. This book is beautiful, but certainly not a disaster. After Griffon comes clean, there was no way to not like him. He is totally lovable.

Cole is confused, pretty much throughout the entire book, and I don't blame her. Just when you think you know what is going on, you, the reader, are left even more confused and unsure of who is the bad guy in the story. Even at the end, I am still confused, there was one sentence, one glimpse of another Akhet recognizing Cole that is never explained or brought up again, and I want to know who he is/was in a past life- ugh! That

has left me so frustrated.

But anyhow, *Transcendence* is fast paced and you keep learning new things about all the characters pretty quickly. There is a nice mix of romance and action. There are enough things left open that if the author wanted to write another book, which I am pretty sure she did according to her goodreads page, then more things can be cleared up. If you only read this book, there is closure and a conclusion; it is not a cliff hanger ending.

I highly recommend this book to teens and YA. There is no sex or even alluding to sex, even though there is romance. There is some violence, since part of the story involves fighting a bad guy, but it is nothing gory. This is a nice clean YA book, something that is hard to come by nowadays. Parents and teachers should feel ok recommending this book to kids, unless you have a problem with the paranormal genre. If you are Christian, this may not be a good one to recommend since the idea of the plot is that some humans are reincarnated over and over and will eventually remember their past lives. I am Christian and would not have a problem with my kids reading this as long as I felt they would not get confused about their beliefs, this is just a story anyways.

I received this book as an ARC. I do not get paid to review books; I do so in order to assist you in recognizing books that you might enjoy and also to assist parents and teachers in recommending appropriate books for your kids to read.

Please read more of my reviews on my blog: [sarahereads\(dot\)wordpress\(dot\)com](http://sarahereads(dot)wordpress(dot)com)

Jessie (Ageless Pages Reviews) says

Read This Review & More Like It On My Blog!

4.25 out of 5 stars

First, immediate thoughts upon finishing this quick read of a teenage paranormal novel:

That was a lot of fun! That was original and wholly compelling, and it managed to be all that and more without a love triangle or a heroine who is too stupid to live! It can be done!

Though *Transcendence* inevitably hits a few bumps that keep it from being perfect, it was perfectly enjoyable and fully diverting for the few (far too short!) hours it took me to consume all 300+ pages. This was one of those all-too-hard-to-find novels that combined my desire to see how everything ended while contradictorily, not wanting to finish and end the fun. With welcome infusions of ideas and themes from some of the more underutilized mythologies (Egyptian symbols! Reincarnation!), *Transcendence* is unique, entertaining and compulsively readable experience. This is my first exposure to this author, but I can guarantee that it will not be the last time I read her work. I've added Omololu's YA contemporary novel, *Dirty Little Secrets*, to my TBR just based off of the many strengths of this novel, despite the extreme difference in the genres of the two novels, as well as initiating a countdown for the inevitable sequel to this one, *Fated*. I can't believe how unfair it is that I have to wait another entire year, until June of 2013!, to escape back into this exciting story.

First-person POV works really, really well here in *Transcendence*, for both Omololu's easy style and for the strong, believably teenage voice of Cole, the main character. Cole is a wonderfully realized character: she's smart, flawed, funny and all the more real for the care that evidently went into her development. Plus she admits Harry Potter is her favorite book, so she gets +100 for that alone. Cole is a strong character, one that is self-defined and one that wants to save herself. When she says to Griffon: "Just because I don't want to be the helpless female in his hero movie doesn't mean I want him to go," I cheered for her. Mentally. I totally did not say "hell yeah" out loud. Noo. That would be embarrassing. Anyway. Love isn't dependence, kids. Love isn't someone rescuing you and making your decisions. It is so nice (but sadly rare) to read a teenage protagonist without that misconception; one that can accept help without being helpless or brainless. It's a fine balance but one that is well-struck here with *Transcendence's* Nicole. She doesn't depend on or live for a boy: this is talented, well-drawn, full-realized character and her love for music is one of the most defining aspects of her multi-faceted personality. Even just talking about music, it's obvious how much love Cole has for what she does ("My heart races as his bow glides over the strings, an unspoken communication that fills the room, replacing the air with sound and emotion." p. 51 ARC), as well as showing that this isn't a character that is defined by anyone else.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention the infinite kudos deserved by this author for the variance of races among her secondary cast. White-washing is a horrid, horrid trend in young-adult book publishing, one that needs to stop. Griffon is an African-American (**and is shown on the cover too!**), and there are other characters that aren't uniformly Caucasian or European that actually participate in the novel. I wish Gabi had played a bit more into the events of the novel, but an Indian close friend and a black love interest is a lot more diversity than most books ever do. It's obvious early on that the author isn't interested in doing what others are: her vision for her novel is unique and fresh and that's how it reads, from plot to themes to characters themselves. I mean, at just first glance, this book contains: Egyptian mythology, a racially diverse cast, an aware and self-confident protagonist, no instalove, no random girl-on-girl hate, AND no love triangle? It's refreshing and it's over all too soon. Other authors: please take note. I want more of ALL THIS.

The idea of reincarnation is not one I've seen too often in this particular genre, so straight off the bat Omololu gets major points for her originality. YA paranormals tend to stick more toward the vampires, werewolves and ghosts of the supernatural spectrum; the only other novel I can recall that focuses on immortality without those genre staples was Avery Williams's short but fun *The Alchemy of Forever*. Both *Alchemy* and *Transcendence* use their originality and fresh perspectives to their favor; this never has the echoes of "been there, done that" storylines that so many other YA novels often do contain. I mean, really: how long can we read about the ordinary, beautiful-but-unaware of it mortal girl in the thrall of a vampire? Using such a fresh concept like essence transition really does make *Transcendence* stand out. Omololu isn't afraid to face the questions at the core of her characters' soul transmigrations - when one can remember lives upon lives for hundreds of years, what do you take with you to each new experience? Love? Guilt? Intelligence? Responsibility? Revenge? How can you justify a romantic relationship between someone who's aware of his hundreds of years of life and someone who only has 17 to recall? It certainly feels a little squicky at the outset, but all is not as it seems. And, CJ Omololu actually takes the time to explore and answer these questions, all nearly to satisfaction.

As for the romance, I admit I was veery hesitant and wary of where that could go with Cole and her love interest, Griffon. Clearly with the theme of reincarnation, a lot of writers would go for the star-crossed instalove connection. It almost *begs* for it with a set up like a time-slip novel - a love out of time is a romantic idea and one that understandably holds appeal to a variety of audiences. However, Omololu doesn't go that route, skipping immediately down Romance Avenue and happily-ever-afters. Wonder of wonders, this is an author that takes time, care and detail into crafting a real, believable connection between the two "teens", one that is not wholly based on who they were before, but on who they are now in the present. Their

romance is sweet, frustrating and above all - credible. No instalove here just a relationship that slowly blooms into a natural and endearing partnership. Love in all its forms is shown throughout the novel, actually, and this is one of the few YAs that takes the time and effort to feature a functional, if not traditional, family life. The mom may be the most one-dimensional character of the whole novel (and brought back unfavorable echoes of Diana in *Virtuosity*) but even she grows and changes a bit over the book.

I enjoyed a lot about this, but it is not without faults. The plot can be weak in certain sections of the novel, some twists and turns of the plot feel and can come across as very contrived, and one of my least favorite plot devices, the "I have a super-sekrit, dangerous plan I can tell NO ONE about" comes out to play late in the course of the book. I wish the plot had a been a bit stronger, but my enjoyment of the characters, the mythology, and Cole's inner monologue keep the deficit from being a glaring issue. These are minor complaints in the shadow of all the AWESOME that is in play for this book - they detract but a little, and I still feel all fangirly about *Transcendence*. With several big twists I really did NOT see coming and more late-in-the-game open-ended questions than answers, *Transcendence* leaves the door wide open for its sequel without sacrificing satisfaction for the readers and fans of the first.

Though *Fated* is more than a year away (nooo) and I can see the love-triangle brewing with a vengeance (**nooo!**), I can't wait to get back to this uniquely paranormal series, and these delightful, rounded characters. If you're looking for an engrossing, easily readable YA with lots of action and a hint of mystery, look no further.

J.C. Phillipps says

Transcendence is the kind of book that hits my sweet spot. It's based in reality but an enhanced reality, a magical reality. It's here and now but with a fun twist: reincarnation.

I really loved the way C. J. Omololu weaved the snippets of memory of Cole's past lives into the narrative. The flow was smooth and I always felt as though I was right there with her. The overall writing is fabulous. I love good writing where I might think, "Wow, I love how she put that," without being yanked out of the story by "showy" writing. I hate when the author is too present in a book. *Transcendence* DOES NOT have that problem at all. (This is also true in Ms. Omololu's first novel, *Dirty Little Secrets*. She's a wonderful writer!)

Probably my favorite things about this book is the little peek we get into the underground world of the Sekhem, an organized group of Akhet (people who remember their past lives) who use their ability to help mankind. We just get a hint of it this time around, b/c this story is an introduction for the character into that world, but I just know (hope) that we'll get more into it in the next book. Ooooooo, I can't wait.

My only complaint with this book is that I'm done with it and now have to wait for the second one.

Anna Banana says

Review: What were my expectations of this book? Hmm I thought it sounded interesting enough and I figured I would enjoy it but never did I think I would end up liking the book so much.

From the first page, I was hooked. I could hardly believe it myself as I looked down and realized I finished the book in a matter of a few hours but it was just that good. Everything about the book from the characters, details, even the little things they said had me smiling and eagerly reading on.

Another cool factor about this book was the flashback from previous lives Cole kept having throughout the book. I've always been fascinated by reincarnation and honestly I'm kind of a believer in it. I mean, how cool is it to think that you were maybe a queen or rich in a previous life?

The best part? A great love story. I loved the relationship between Cole Griffon; it was realistic and didn't feel forced or fake at all. Yes they did know each other for a short amount of time and the fact that he ironically lived closed to her back in the U.S. was a little non realistic but it almost seems normal and natural in the book.

Transcendence is a must read for everyone, especially if you're looking for something fresh and a great love story.
