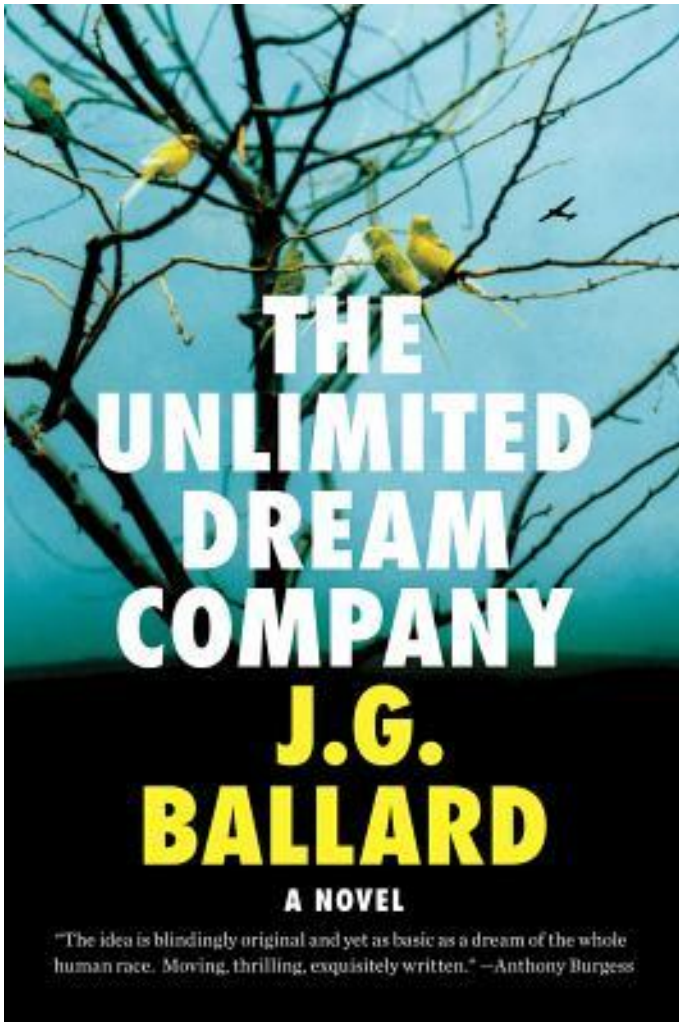

J.G. Ballard

The Unlimited Dream Company



Title: The Unlimited Dream Company

Author: J.G. Ballard

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Description

When a light aircraft crashes into the Thames at Shepperton, the young pilot who struggles to the surface minutes later seems to have come back from the dead. Within hours everything in the dormitory suburb is transformed. Vultures invade rooftops, luxuriant tropical vegetation overruns the quiet avenues, and the local inhabitants are propelled by the young man's urgent visions through ecstatic sexual celebrations toward an apocalyptic climax. In this characteristically inventive novel Ballard displays to devastating effect the extraordinary imagination that has established him as one of the twentieth century's most visionary writers.

Insightful reviews

Robert: Blake, a crazy bloke, obsessed with flying, steals a Cessna light aircraft from a maintenance hangar in London Airport. Because the plane is faulty and Blake doesn't know how to fly properly, would-be aviator and aircraft crash into the Thames at Shepperton shortly afterwards.

After ten minutes, Blake is dragged from the river shore onto the grounds of a mansion. Once his confusion clears, he tries to escape Shepperton and the police he can hear pursuing him but finds he cannot - something prevents him - and the police never arrive to arrest him.

Discovering strange urges, some of them disturbing, some of them perverted, Blake lurches from one weird adventure to another, having visions that pre-figure miracles of transformation. Blake himself transforms to a bird, a whale and a stag; Shepperton is transformed by him into a tropical realm of birds flowers and other vegetation, where the townsfolk return to a state of innocence reminiscent of Adam and Eve in Eden.

Blake takes the townsfolk into himself, then out again, teaching them to fly in the process only to be shot by the one man who refuses to accept Blake's miracles or even his status as a living man. Blake almost dies but is restored to full health by the plants and animals around him donating their strength. Blake then takes the folk of Shepperton into the sky again, this time to become an incorporeal merged entity in the heavens, before himself falling back into a grave to finally die.

Or does he? Is Blake a Pagan Messiah, come to redeem the people of Shepperton through an almost-death, almost resurrection, and lead them to Heaven or is he in fact drowning in the cockpit of his stolen aircraft, his visions and miracles nothing more than the last sparks of activity in a dying brain?

I went with the latter idea until the last quarter of the book, only then to develop doubts, before, very near the end going back to my original position. I think it is ambiguous enough that the reader can choose which ever interpretation he or she prefers.

In many ways this book is typical Ballard; the protagonist is clearly nuts from the outset and does not comprehend his own motivations or actions, also from the outset. More or less surreal events occur - in this book, *extremely* surreal events! The book ends somewhat ambiguously.

One thing that is strikingly different from most of his books, however, is that rather than having society or the planet or some microcosm of both deteriorating drastically into chaos and irrationality, Shepperton is turned into Paradise, the townsfolk into Innocents. A quote from Time Out's review, printed at the beginning of the book, suggests that *The Unlimited Dream Company* is Ballard's most optimistic work. I can't argue with that, based on what I've read by Ballard (which is a fair number but probably still not half his books).

Despite the brevity of the book, the middle section, dealing with the transformation of Shepperton is repetitive both in incident and in imagery, detracting from the power of the surreal events. The book really needs to be even shorter! This is perhaps the more irritating for being the only thing preventing it being the perfect realisation of the ideas Ballard wants to express in it.

Charles Dee Mitchell: This book has more the quality of a psychedelic vision unfolding before the readers gaze than did the earlier Ballard novels I have recently read. Here there is no Conradian voyage upriver, as in *The Crystal World* or *The Drought*. (Of course the river is dry in the latter.) The theme is still one of transformation, of discovering one's true self in a changed world, although here the main character is mad or possibly dead. I also suspect that for British readers there is something intrinsically funny about the Shepperton location that is largely lost Stateside.

Shane: in this edition there's an interview with Ballard at the back where he says that a 'professional' should write 1000+ words a day. Otherwise the writer will just 'end up with a bunch of empty wine bottles'.

From this book I learned a professional empties the bottles at night, then forces her/himself to write a chapter a day (every chapter is ~1000 words), most of which is a recap from the day before. It's taken me 4 months to read this 200 page book and not because I wanted to savor it but because, like television, there's no way to bear all the repetitions and reminders if you don't need reminding.

There is brilliance. But these must have been after whiskey or gin nights. Otherwise it's a big old dirty diaper of a book.

Logan: Terrible. Just, terrible. there is quite no personality interaction. The discussion is minimum and more often than not meaningless. there is not any personality development, and the tale arc is one vast flat line. At best, this can be a 30 web page brief story, yet as an alternative it really is 235 pages of never-ending description of bullshit, over-the-top, dull "miracle" after "miracle" instructed within the first individual by means of a charmless "messiah". On and on and on. i began pace examining a hundred and fifty pages in and it was once nonetheless fucking torture to get through the final eighty five pages. After having simply learn CRASH and urban ISLAND i used to be hoping the publication could redeem itself somehow, however it simply bought worse rather than better. I must have surrender approximately 70 pages in, probably. So it goes!

Hilary G: the truth that i've got comprehensive this ebook makes me suppose like ingesting

champagne, dancing within the rain, throwing a party, bouncing on a trampoline.... Why? simply because I LOATHED this e-book and carrying on with to learn it was once worse than the time I received 3 detentions in school on my birthday, worse than looking forward to the result of a clinical attempt that would end up you've gotten a terrible disease, worse than being trapped in a teach compartment with an interminable bore. I simply wanted it to be OVER. So why did I proceed to the end, and never throw the ebook within the dustbin, or flush it down the toilet or donate it to the closest organised Bonfire evening event? simply because i used to be hoping that sooner or later i'd notice a few coherence or intending to make the awfulness of losing my lifestyles in this e-book worthwhile. This was once a forlorn hope. When i used to be young, I gobbled technology fiction novels so speedy that I had learn just about all they'd in my neighborhood library by the point i used to be approximately 15. And yet, I by no means learn whatever through J G Ballard, supposedly one of many giants of this genre. i do know that there were many makes an attempt by way of many people, so much of them cleverer than me, to outline SF. i do not be aware of what SF is, yet i will be able to say with certainty, this wasn't it. there has been no technological know-how here, no logic. It was once just like the demented, rambling outpourings of a intercourse maniac on LSD. I have by no means suggestion that i used to be a prude, yet I favor my analyzing to not have semen on each web page (if Ballard used to be paid for each time he used the word, he should have been rather well paid). different people's intercourse is dull and his imaginative and prescient of sex, paedophilia, incest, semen, shit, blood and pus was once abdominal churningly disgusting. I suspect this was once meant to be a few type of Eden parable because the complete unclothed inhabitants of Shepperton "did no longer comprehend they have been naked". i used to be bored the second one time this was once mentioned, by no means brain the 3rd, 4th, fifth and nth. You may need accrued that i did not very similar to this book! the easiest factor i will say approximately it really is that it used to be no longer badly written, in fact, J G Ballard is maybe relatively an exceptional writer. it is a pity, therefore, that he wasted his expertise in this load of meaningless drivel.

Tom: brilliant and disturbing, within the top Ballard way.

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