



## Chimpanzee

*Darin Bradley*

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## Chimpanzee Darin Bradley

Unemployment has ravaged the U.S. economy. People struggle everywhere, exhausted by the collapse that destroyed their lives. Benjamin Cade is an expert in cognition, and before the flatlined economy caught up to him, he earned his living as a university instructor. Now, without income, he joins the millions defaulting on their loans — in his case, the money he borrowed to finance his degrees. But there are consequences. Using advances in cognitive science and chemical therapy, Ben's debtors can reclaim their property — his education. The government calls the process “Repossession Therapy.” The data Ben's repossession will yield is invaluable to those improving the “indexing” technology — a remarkable medical advance that has enabled the effective cure of all mental disorders. By disassembling his mind, doctors will gain the expertise to assist untold millions. But Ben has no intention of losing his mind without a fight, so he begins teaching in the park, distributing his knowledge before it's gone in a race against ignorance. And somewhere in Ben's confusing takedown, Chimpanzee arrives. Its iconography appears spray-painted around town. Young people in rubber chimpanzee masks start massive protests. As Ben slowly loses himself, the Chimpanzee movement seems to grow. And all fingers point to Ben.

## Chimpanzee Details

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Author : Darin Bradley

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## From Reader Review Chimpanzee for online ebook

### **Daniel Amaral says**

This book was just ok for my taste. I initially got it because I heard it was an interesting modern dystopic novel, and I wanted to see what the modern dystopia genre was all about. I don't feel I got a very good introduction out of this one, however. It's got a lot of interesting ideas with vr drugs "chimp goggles", the repossession therapy where basically you repay your debt to the government with your memories, and I did like how they showed Ben's memories disappearing over the course of the book. And the Renewal program was an interesting concept too, tho by the end of it, it didn't understand what its purpose was.

I think that's the most glaring flaw of the book as I feel what it is all revealed by the end doesn't make much sense, and kind of undid all the interesting ideas it was going for. This would ok if the plot up to the point where shit was going down was interesting, but it felt like there wasn't much to chew on by the end of the book.

The character's too were not very interesting. Seeing the book through the eyes of an unemployed English professor who seems to be uninterested by everything and has contempt for everyone he meets is hard to read. Admittedly he is well crafted that you know about his memories before he loses them as well as the relationships he has with all the other characters, but he just was not someone I want to read about. He's almost like a stereotypical boring college professor.

And the writing feels uneven too. I do understand the intention of it being choppy considering what happens throughout the story, but you only get to some really good descriptions and gripping situations about 3/4 of the way in. The rest of it is just him moping around and very SLOWLY building up to what this book is all about.

Now, as with all dystopic novels, the novel wants to give a message we can all take away and look our societies in a different way. So what is it I can take away from this novel? I suppose that we lose our sense of humanity when we let forces, like government and economics, out of our control, and we lose our ability to speak and express ourselves. Ben throughout the book is teaching people how a message is conveyed and culminates into something out Ben's control. Whether this is a caution against what we say or a call to action to be more expressive is up to the reader, but that ending really makes me question if everything the novel was building up to was pointless. Which doesn't really encourage me to go back and try to piece it together.

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### **Rick Hunter says**

I won this book through Goodreads Firstreads giveaway.

I really, really wanted to like this book. Of the 500 or so books that I've entered to win here on Goodreads, this would be in the top 10 of the ones that I wanted the most. The concept of this book is one of the most original ideas that I've ever heard of. In the book, the government repossesses people's educations by hooking them up to these machines if that individual has defaulted on their student loan. That sounds super interesting to me. Unfortunately, the execution of putting that idea onto paper is where the author fell short. I have an English degree, but my knowledge of English Theory is nowhere on the level of Darin Bradley's. My vocabulary isn't even on par with his. He uses the word scalar several times. I looked the word up and still

don't really understand what it means. It has something to do with math and physics, but that's about all I could tell you about it. As to the context that scalar was used by Bradley in the book, I have absolutely no idea of what he was trying to say.

There are other instances in the book where Bradley tries to get too philosophical talking about the meaning of self, or space, or something else that just slows down the pace of the story. The next thing thing you know there might be a page or two that go go by and you'll start thinking that the story might be about to pick up pace and become interesting, but he'll jump to another time, go to describing what syntax or rhetoric mean, jump back to the present for a sentence or two, go back to the past for a few lines, or anything else that mires the story down to keep the story from moving along. The fact that the story jumps around so often really irritated me. I don't have ADHD. I can focus on one thing for a while. Mr Bradley doesn't seem to be able to do that. I found the title of the book to be very suitable since the story jumped about about as much as a monkey in a cage at a zoo flinging feces everywhere. The author of the book was also a figurative monkey flinging some feces onto a page.

I honestly don't know of a single person that I could recommend this book to. I know people that are in the field of academics. Those people range from teachers to principals. I don't believe that a single one of them would get what the author was trying to say and/or enjoy the journey that the author takes them down. Since I don't personally know anyone that would like this book out of all the readers I know, I can't in good conscience recommend it to the public at large.

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### **Sara DeSantis says**

A book we mentioned in class

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### **Jess says**

I didn't like this book because frankly, I didn't understand it. I don't know what happened in it and I don't know what it was trying to say.

I was intrigued by the premise that if one defaults on his student loans, the government could repossess the knowledge you had gained during your education. That idea is tied up with what exactly constitutes the "self"--our memories, experiences, associations or something more concrete?

However, everything was far too vague to understand what the author was saying. Even the basic plot is unclear to me, as well as the mechanisms by which the repossession therapy and "chipping" are executed. There are things that just don't make sense. The main character has no idea what's going on and is constantly exhorted to "figure it out". It doesn't seem like he ever does, and I certainly didn't. Nothing was answered, nothing was explained. I don't know if the author really just didn't have any answers or thought that this style of obfuscating and implying was groundbreaking writing--given that he has a PhD in literary theory I'm guessing a little of column A and a little of column B--but whatever he was attempting was not successful.

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## **AudioBookReviewer says**

### **My original Chimpanzee audiobook review and many others can be found at Audiobook Reviewer.**

The economy has collapsed. The government is overwhelmed, crushed by national and personal debt and the corresponding lack of revenue. Benjamin Cade has lost his teaching job, and like so many others, has defaulted on his student loans. Technology and economics have come up with a solution. If you don't pay for your education you lose it. Cade must now go through the grueling brain therapy that repossesses his PhD while simultaneously working in a government work detail – translation: chain gang. When they're done, he won't be able to remember the things he learned or discovered during his doctoral program.

This innovative novel is not for everyone, but for the right audience is an exceptional work of fiction and performance. Part pedagogy and part Sci-Fi dystopia, the listener is constantly challenged both intellectually and philosophically. Is the American Dream really this banal?

This is not simply a narrated novel; it is a performance piece with multiple voices, music and sound effects. It is generally well done and effective, giving us ambiance when Cade goes to a party, or static when Cade's education is being blocked. The production is odd at times however, giving unnecessarily long pauses between character dialogue or scene changes. This is sometimes confusing (intentionally?), but not enough to detract from an otherwise excellent and unique performance audio-book. The author is the main narrator and does an excellent job reading his own novel. No one knows the story better than its author. The music is great and you will want to find out who the bands are (listed at the end of the novel).

Pick up Chimpanzee because you want to be challenged, want to think about the future, about real possibilities and important ideas. If you are a lover of Philip K. Dick's last novels, paranoid and identity confusing, Ray Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451 or Cory Doctorow's many near-future dystopian novels, you will likely enjoy this book. At six hours, it is a relatively short listen, but packed with a lot of information. Yes, it is good enough to listen to several times, and you will want to, to catch the nuance and philosophical density. It is not a light listen, you have to pay attention, stop what you are doing, really listen and think about the author's ideas. You may not agree, but you will appreciate the chance to use your mind for a change.

Audiobook purchased for review by ABR.

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## **Sandra Frey says**

There's a great sci-fi dystopian idea in this book, and the mention of it on the cover flap was what made me excited to read it--the idea that if people default on their student loans, the government can repossess their education. There are great peripheral questions that accompany this idea, questions that the author does touch on, but doesn't really explore--such as what happens to the parts of you that the government redacts (and stores), what this does to your memories and relationships from a particular chunk of your life, and what ripple effects it ends up having on your entire personality and purpose. I am still excited by the idea of reading THAT book, the one that goes in deep to explain the process and the unintended effects.

This book couches the whole idea in a sort of mishmash of more generic dystopian conditions (poverty, oppression, unrest), which are never holistically explained, and so reveal themselves at an odd pace. (E.g., you're pretty far into the story before the author casually mentions that the government sends monitors out to

spy on people for signs of inefficiency.) The book also couches the entire plot in somewhat dense explanations of academic theory--cognitive, psychological, behavioral, philosophical. These do remind you of how critical academics are to this character who is scheduled to lose them, but they also read substantially like the author analyzing his own work in order to show you the thought he put into building his world. This is to say, the tail starts to wag the dog; it feels as though the plot starts to revolve around highlighting particular theoretical principles the author wants to address.

The ultimate effect is a loss of immediacy. Things of great consequence seem to be happening, but they are discussed in a style that places analysis over narration. The consequences become minimally consequential. Given that this is not the first story to use primates as a revolutionary symbol, I found myself missing the oomph of the others.

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### **Alex Ristea says**

Got about 25% into the audiobook, and putting it down. This novel is not for me.

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### **Philip says**

I'm not entirely sure what I just read, but I think I loved it.

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### **Yann Rousselot says**

So if you took Twelve Monkeys, add The Time Traveler's Wife but subtract the time-travel, multiply by 1984, factor in Strange Days and divide by Fight Club, you get Chimpanzee. (Wow, that required some intense concentration. Had I had a PhD it would have been easier - maybe I do, and it was reposessed.)

Honestly, I fell into this novel with gusto. The prose is tight, so tight sometimes you wish he's just let loose with some florid flourish, but Bradley's prose is straight-edge, sharp as a tack. The narrator has a PhD in cognitive science and philosophy (or something...) so a lot of the work is steeped in this first-person's clever-dick POV, but it's not showing off: it's central to the plot.

Well, sort of.

The world is crumbling, this sort of failed-capitalist leading to failed-socialist nightmare dystopia, errday errthang is falling to pieces, people are having their educations reposessed like some clockwork orange therapy, and anyone defaulting on their loans becomes a slave to the state. There is a revolution fomenting, a black market currency rising, censorship is the order of the day, everyone is afraid of taxes and government intervention and there is no spoon and the cake is a lie.

There is not much action either, but there is this love story. That's one of the things that kept me going, the love story is close to the bone, tempered by the greyness of time and hardship, a sort of realism, a sort of deromanticising which is romantic in itself. (The flashbacks grow gap-toothed, memories collapse, crumbling the foundations of a love story, à la Eternal Sunshine - truly poignant)

The plot is dense, moves along smoothly, the prose is so clever and yet nebulous (imagine a philosopher painting the world as his mind falls apart) I found myself getting into it just because I like the sound of the guy's voice.

The thing about *The Time Traveler's Wife*, *Fight Club*, *Strange Days* and *12 Monkeys*, is that the ending was always so spectacular you were left kind of breathless, gasping like a fish out of water. The ending to *Chimp* is a little flat in comparison, specially given the scale of the conclusion, the actual events, all seem muted by the character's distant POV. That clinical distance is an interesting device, and creates this space for commentary, humour, and poignant moments, but also takes us away from the action a little.

I am a sucker for action, but it wasn't a deal-breaker, this is a strong novel with rich characters who I wanted to understand, wanted to see unfold. Highly recommend, I'll be keeping an eye out for Bradley's work in the future.

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### **Ruth says**

*Chimpanzee* is an intelligent dystopian novel. Bradley introduces a future where America is deep into a New Depression. People are losing their jobs, and struggling to survive. Benjamin Cade, a PhD in literature, finds himself as one of the strugglers and can no longer pay on his student loans. No problem, his loan holders can now take back what he gained with their money, in Benjamin's case they are repossessing his education. Through advances in cognitive science and chemical therapy, Ben must undergo Repossession Therapy and "give back" his advanced degrees by surrendering his memory of graduate and doctorate school. Not wanting to lose himself in this process, Ben starts teaching in a public park free for everyone. As his following grows, he finds himself swept up in an underground counterculture that he was only dimly aware existed.

Bradley's writing is reminiscent of Orwell. It is a commentary on current trends of society taken to an extreme. If you are looking for a novel that will make you stop and think, but yet still be entertained, then read *Chimpanzee*.

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### **Charles Dee Mitchell says**

In *Noise*, Bradley's first novel, groups of young people learned that in the static of now defunct analog television broadcasts, some person or group was laying down rules for how to survive an imminent breakdown of society. The rulebook lay out the necessary stockpiling of food and weaponry, but its most important lessons were in ruthlessness. When the collapse begins, we see how well the group Bradley created has absorbed these lessons.

*Chimpanzee* is a not a sequel to the first novel, but Bradley has stated it is part of a "thematic cluster." The collapse has not led to anarchy. The world has settled into what is called The Second Great Depression, and the government has taken the necessary measures to maintain a tenuous control. Many of the unemployed find a place in government-sponsored Renewel service. But this is no WPA. Renewel employees are working off debts by doing menial, manual labor that is in stark contrast to the professions they once held. They are also conscripted to become Monitors, spies expected to report insurgent or merely suspicious behavior.

Cade, the hero of the novel, has learned that his PhD in literary theory did not guarantee him a job in academia. He has been ordered to report to Renewal. But in what is both Bradley's funniest and creepiest invention, he must pay off his student loans by undergoing Repossession Therapy. Over a series of sessions, his therapist will use newly invented technology to remove everything that Cade learned at University, starting with the most advanced work he did for his PhD.

Life in the Depression goes on. Stores are seriously understocked, but Cade, his wife, and their friends still meet in pubs for beers, go to movies, go to clubs to hear new bands, and attend parties. There are hiking trips to state parks. And there is the new pastime called "chiming." Chiming incorporates goggles similar to what Cade wears in his therapy sessions. When you chimp, you put them on and choose from a menu of moods and experiences. His first time out, Cade learns that "paranoia" is not a good choice.

Meanwhile, Cade's wife still has her mathematics professorship at the local university. With her income they look to buy one of the many bargain-priced homes among the foreclosed properties on offer. They also plan to have a baby.

Cade is bored. He begins teaching impromptu classes in rhetoric and literary theory in a nearby park. Informal outdoor classes have become something of a fad, and he wants to make some use of his education before Repossession Therapy takes it away. He attracts a crowd of young people surprisingly eager to learn what he has to say about rhetoric and literary theory. Monitors observe but do not interfere--that is until they do. His young students introduce Cade to an underground society living in squats and developing their own monetary system. Cade thinks of himself as an outside observer with this crowd, but revolution is brewing. Cade is getting pulled into its vortex.

Bradley's has not titled his novel after the "chiming" technology that plays a larger and larger role in it. Rather chiming itself seems to reference the stickers and spray-painted stencils of a screaming chimpanzee head that have become a prevalent form of graffiti. It's meaning remains elusive, but it follows the first dictate of Cade's instruction to his students. You begin by getting your audience's attention.

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## **Lori says**

Read 1/23/16 - 2/1/16

4 Stars - Strongly Recommended that you pay your friggen school loans off because holy shit the government is gonna get theirs...

Pages: 216

Publisher: Underland Press

Released: 2015

Holy fuck you guys, get those school loans paid off, pronto!

In a future dystopia, America enters The Second Great Depression and people are losing their jobs left and right. In an effort to maintain some form of control, as college grads begin to default on their school loans, the government starts forcefully removing their unpaid 'education', and the memories attached to that education, from their brains through a process called Repossession Therapy. A crazy underground movement emerges, one that Dr. Benjamin Cade finds himself pulled into, when he begins holding free classes in the middle of a local park, in a desperate attempt to pass on his knowledge before it's completely taken from him.

It's like Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind only you don't get to choose what's taken from you. And what's taken from you can be stored, stolen, and sold on the black market. It's a fucking horror show. I don't know about you, but if my husband or I lost our job and could only afford to pay some of our bills, I'd make damn sure we'd throw all of our money at the ones that would cause someone to come knocking on my door, tie me to a couch, and suck memories out of my brain. Cell phone bill? Suddenly not important anymore. Sell the shittin' things on Ebay. Cable bill? Nu-uh. Screw that. No more Walking Dead and X-Files. It's a sacrifice I am willing to make. Car loans? Welp, one of us is out of work so we don't need to drive anywhere anymore. They can repo the car. Take it. Have fun with it. Credit cards? Ok, come on over and take back the couch, the TV (since we won't be watching anything on it, haha) and whatever else we've charged. But no fucking way are you putting that memory-sucking freak cap on my head and messing with my mind. Not having it!

This is science fiction grounded in reality. This is fright fiction because it's not-so-far-fetched. This is the kind of book we'll look back on in 20 years and say "how the hell did Darin predict this?". It's scary because it could happen. It's scary because Darin could be writing about himself. It's scary because it's something I could see our government doing when push comes to shove.

And how strangely timely, because have you seen the news? A man was just recently arrested for failure to appear in court for a school loan that went unpaid for nearly 30 years!

This future, it's coming. And it ain't looking too promising, ya'll.

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## **David says**

First of all, the book has a clever concept. Take the current topic of student loan debt, then incorporate what lenders do when a borrower defaults on payments on a mortgage or car loan - repossession. The book doesn't assume this can be done the same way as a car repossession (taking the car to a sales lot and selling the same car to another buyer.) Rather, what is done is make the person who can't pay his student loan effectively unable to access (and therefore unable to use) the education related to the unpaid debt. They impose unpleasant associations which cause the mind to suppress the learning experience. Let's hope the book doesn't give lenders any ideas.

The author is able to use words in an artful way. (This is not my top priorities, but it's good if you can get that as well as the other things.) However, I found one aspect of the text bothersome. The book is a first-person account by Ben, who defaulted on his loans and is going through "repossession therapy." As he presents the story, we often get a flashback in the middle of the current scene. These don't always seem truly relevant or informative to the scene being interrupted. And, at least in the audiobook, it's not always clear at first a flashback is being inserted rather than simply an abrupt change of scene. The author may intend this to reflect Ben's mental state as a result of repossession therapy, I'm not sure. I think there are other less

confusing ways the impact of the repossession therapy could be shown, including some which the author used. For instance, having Ben telling us something, but leaving blanks in the text for things he was no longer able to access.

Ben seems to be accepting of the repossession therapy to which he is required to submit. Considering the facts that his background has given him much knowledge of cognition, and therefore perhaps better understanding of the intended and unintended consequences of the therapy, that can make readers think about this more. The book conveys that the perspective on life, understanding, social interactions, etc. which Ben gained through his education is an important part of who he is (was before therapy.) So, one can imagine how much it will change Ben.

As the book progresses, we see more of a counter-culture trying to provide some of what the mainstream culture is failing to do. The significance of this grows, perhaps more than one would think.

At the end of the book, Ben appears to have discovered the answer to something which had previously eluded him. Ben's answer is never explicitly stated. I could suggest a few possible answers, and I could suggest objections to each of them. In that sense, the ending was not satisfying. On a larger scale, the book suggests coming events which the reader does not actually get to see.

The book does give readers things to think about, and a unique vision of a possible future.

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### **Jenny (Reading Envy) says**

This is a review of the hardcover, but I have to say I am really looking forward to listening to the radio play version that arrived in my mailbox on Saturday!

What I need in my dystopia is realism and possibility, that it could happen here, in my lifetime. That is the brilliance Darin Bradley brings to his novels, both in *Noise* and in *Chimpanzee*.

The premise of *Chimpanzee* may be even more chilling to those of us working in academia, who have seen the impact of the various economic downturns on expensive liberal arts educations. Now that there are no job guarantees, and no guarantee on the investment made (often by the students through hefty loans), people are starting to question the benefit of the system we have maintained for so long.

I hate this conversation, because I work at one of those schools, and depend on it for my livelihood. So did the author, for a while. And that's where reality and the terror of this possible future start to blur within the novel. Benjamin Cade, actually Dr. Benjamin Cade, can't find work teaching and can't pay back his student loans. He is in the middle of having his education repossessed, a treatment that deletes memories along with knowledge. In the meantime, he is required to pay back the cost of the treatments by working for Renewal, the government structure that reigns in some of the chaos during the New Depression.

Cade's memories are included every once in a while between the text of the present day, and the reader can see how the repossession has started to effect them. I don't want to say more about the story because I think the rest should be discovered by the reader.

Anyone else still paying off their student loans? Yeah....

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## Mary says

Chimpanzee, by Darin Bradley

4.5 stars. This first rate sci-fi is reminiscent of Ray Bradbury's " Farenheit 451. Benjamin Cade, PhD. is a former university professor whose position has been eliminated. The U.S. Economy is devastated and half the homes in the country have been foreclosed on. Ben joins the millions of unemployed and is unable to pay back his student loans. The Federal Govt. is determined to reclaim their property...Ben's education. Ben is forced to undergo "Repossession Therapy", a combination of advanced cognitive science and chemical injections which will strip him of not only his degrees, but of his memories as well. Determined to give his knowledge away before it completely disappears, Ben begins teaching in the park and unwittingly becomes tied to a massive protest movement, Chimpanzee.

Fascinating look into the future. Highly recommended.

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