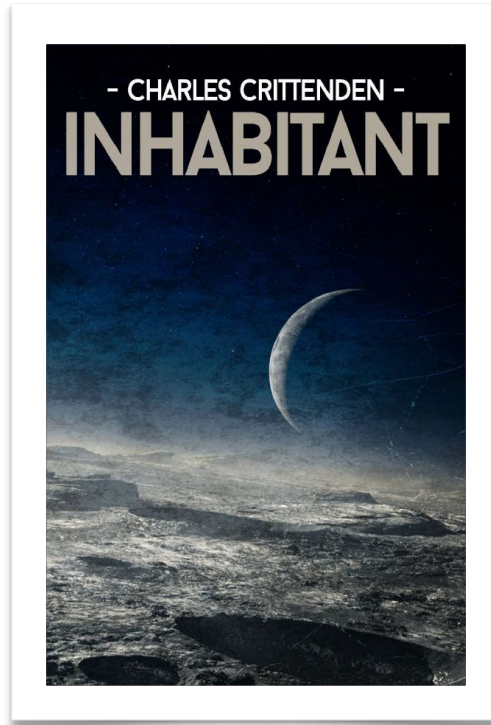




## ***Book Review: Inhabitant***

Reviewed by Samantha Hui



**Experimental, daring, yet subtle, *Inhabitant* ponders the gravity of human existence through nearly alien eyes.**

*Inhabitant* is energetic and eerily silent. This narrative poetry book by Charles Crittenden follows the story of a tired man trying to find a sense of belonging both internally and within the physical universe. This brilliant and sincere book will have readers considering what they take for granted on a daily basis.



***“is this how dogs feel? With everything this slow. / they get one lifetime we get many. / do they see us moving at a snail’s pace wondering / why we won’t seize every last moment?”***

The inhabitant, a man who once inhabited Earth, sets his sights on finding a new place to call home. Due to the toils of dangerous human action against their home, Earth has gone up in flames and rejected, and possibly ejected, every last person. The inhabitant ambles through the galaxy trying to find a home and companionship that, perhaps this time, he will not take for granted. In his quiet search for belonging, he contemplates existential issues involving loneliness, environmentalism, and whether or not the stars know that we exist.

***“do they know what they’re a part of, / does the north star know we count on it?”***

The speaker may be the “inhabitant,” but he is all but an inhabitant. He lacks a home to go or return to. Rather, he must learn to find a sense of home within himself or else he will fall into an insanity caused by longing for what can no longer be. Interestingly enough, the inhabitant also refers to himself as the “watcher.” He is the watcher because he has witnessed the wonders created by people as well as the destruction of the Earth caused by mankind. In being the inhabitant, he is someone both at home and lost from home; as watcher, he is both able to recognize the destruction of the Earth and is implicit in its destruction.

***“earth had always been a self-sustaining world, / though what’s a planet without inhabitants? / what’s an inhabitant without a planet? / a planet can thrive, / but a drifting man can only truly exist on solid ground.”***

What I love about this book is the sort of ebb and flow rhythm it takes on. The free form nature of the poems allows for the writing to rise and fall on the page and in context. The story represents a rebirth and rebuilding of both the earth and the speaker. At the beginning of the book, the speaker dreams of the past and wishes to bring back that which once was: ***“too many planets out there for me / to wonder when this one will match my dreams.”*** However, toward the end of the book, the speaker comes to understand that



misery lies in longing for what cannot exist again. So his dreams transform from hopes for the past into a hope for the future: ***“the rest of my life waits on the other side / the starts turn off one by one / as I disappear into my dreams, / into my future.”***

*Inhabitant* covers the trials of humankind through the eyes of a human-made alien. The story reminds me of Italo Calvino’s collection of stories, *Cosmicomics*, that creates human stories from scientific facts. Sincere and human-focused, *Inhabitant* comes with an easy recommendation from me to those interested in the cross between poetry and science fiction.