



The Inhabited World

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The eighth book from an award-winning and acclaimed author, The Inhabited World is Long's most gripping and profound work.

Evan Molloy -- a son, husband, and stepfather -- fatally shot himself but doesn't know why. He is stuck in a state of purgatory in the house in Washington State where he lived and died. The woman who now lives there, Maureen Keniston, is in her late thirties and is trying to restart her life after breaking off a long affair with a married man. The novel deftly moves back and forth between the story of Evan's troubled life and Maureen's efforts to emerge from her own purgatory. In watching Maureen's struggles and ultimate triumph, Evan comes to see his own life and death in a completely new way.

Part psychological drama, part absorbing mystery, The Inhabited World paints a stirring portrait of a man caught between this world and the next and a woman who unwittingly offers him a sort of redemption he never could have predicted.

The Inhabited World Details

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From Reader Review The Inhabited World for online ebook

Sue says

How is it that a novel about the lingering spirit of a suicide can be one of the most life-affirming books I've read. I'd actually avoided reading this because of the descriptive reviews until a friend convinced me that it was well worth it.

And it is well worth the reading on two levels: the quality of the writing itself and Long's ability to express emotion so carefully and beautifully, as well as the ability to show growth and redemption of the human spirit.

At times the story is difficult but it never takes unkind cuts at its inhabitants who are merely humans (and a spirit) struggling with human problems. It is generous and offers possibilities for the future.

The picture of mental illness and depression gradually taking over a life is devastating but don't let this deter you from reading this novel. That's actually the beginning. There is so much more as well as wonderfully described characters along the way.

The plot is well described in many places and I won't restate it here. I will say the "interaction" of Evan with Maureen made me think, hope and smile.

Jennifer says

Good, good, good. Although I wanted to be told the answers at the end of the book, I think leaving it open was a better ending. The author handled Evan's state of mind eloquently. He manages to bring across the absolute despair, the feeling that you are moving through a heavy atmosphere. And the way Evan questions himself, yet knows himself to be whiny and irritable.

Using Maureen as a framework for Evan's story was new and different. I had expected more parallels in their lives, but Maureen really turns out to be quite a minor character in the book. On the other hand, the story of Evan and Claudia is sad, sad, sad. Both loving and wanting each other, but mental illness getting in the way.

Emily says

Sad and lovely. The narrator is the ghost of a man who committed suicide and is left haunting his own house. His memories spool out over time and the reader gets to know him little by little - and to understand how he came to die. The moment in the book that had the most effect on me was when he describes his unrelenting struggle with depression and how he didn't set out to kill himself - he just had a moment of not fighting hard enough.

Diane says

I found this book fascinating for several reasons. Long is a good writer and I enjoyed an earlier book of his, *Falling Boy*. I also liked the very ordinariness of the main character and the ordinary problems that have a possibly not so ordinary outcome - suicide followed by life as a "shade" (my term not the author's) It is the life of the "shade" that truly fascinated me. I found myself thinking about the descriptions of what this shade could and could not do and was delighted with the author's descriptions of the limitations and attributes. This does not seem like something that would normally delight or fascinate me.

For example, a shade cannot read a book or even a letter since he cannot turn pages. He cannot read people's minds nor hear the other half of conversations nor cause things to fall off shelves nor cause other mischief the way the ghosts George and Marion Kirby and dog Neil did for Cosmo Topper, a favorite childhood TV show. The life of a shade is solitary and reflective. Most interesting, the shade - Evan - can feel emotion and empathy and sympathy but is helpless to make any difference. He watches a young boy fall down the cellar steps and cannot stop the fall. And although he aches to help, he has no way to comfort the boy's mother as she sits distraught at the kitchen table.

But this is also a book that suggests there are second chances in life - and maybe beyond life. A young woman, Maureen, moves into the house where Evan lives as a shade (his former house) and he desperately wants to help her - to reach out to her. It is through his attempt to reach her that he tells the story of his life and his death. We are left not knowing for sure, but perhaps Evan will have a second chance to die and not be shade and Maureen may have a second chance as well.

Margaret says

Beautiful writing; sometimes excruciating story, though, with the story revolving around a man, Evan Molloy, who is dead and "inhabits" the house and property where he died (we know this up front). What's billed on the jacket as a story that revolves around Evan and the then current occupant of the house, Maureen, is in reality more the back story of Evan's life up to and after his death - this story requires the reader to live through a descent into depression leading to Evan's suicide (again, this isn't a spoiler - it's revealed early on). (Note: If anyone wants (?) to read a really good book concerning suicide - such a happy topic! - I recommend "The Suicide Index" (a memoir with some "fictionalized accounts," and a terrific albeit sobering book).)

David Long's writing talent in "The Inhabited World" is evident - many lovely, spot on sentences to like here. Here's a (long) quote concerning Evans's current (post-death) thoughts on God & the afterlife: "As a grown man, Evan had replaced [his mother's] version of the afterlife with - actually, he'd never replaced it with anything. Nothing religious, anyway. He took the visible world for what it was, particles or waves (depending on how you looked at it) coalescing into things you could touch or smell or listen to. Was there "more"? He'd need evidence. And why "shouldn't" he? If people were modeled on God, why should they have to dumb down their powers of judgment? It was demeaning and senseless. But what he really believed was that it simply worked the other way around. The fact of being alive was so unfathomable that people had invented a super-parent to shepherd them through the experience - one both wrathful and loving, aware of individual sparrows and sand fleas but at the same time extraordinarily reluctant to get involved."

The characters - Evan, his (ex-)wife, father, mother-in-law - are vivid and real. Oddly, the one person with jacket cover "billing" in addition to Even, Maureen, remains something of a cipher, and the ending, which concerns her, is not all that satisfying.

The phrase "writer's writer" kept running through my head as I read this book: Story line could use some help (or change it entirely), but the writing is engaging and quite talented.

Bookmarks Magazine says

David Long's fictional landscape often takes place inside the mind. In this case, he develops a ghost-as-narrator who, through flashbacks, pieces together his life. *The Inhabited World* is really two stories, however: Evan's transition from a happily married man to his crippling depression, and Maureen's attempt to leave an abusive affair. These plots may sound depressing, but critics agree that Long creates a sense of calm, centering, and moodiness that recalls his first novel, *The Falling Boy*. Despite all odds, parts of the writing even approach joy as Evan recalls his daily life. A few problems held reviewers back. The interior narrative doesn't engage immediately and, in fact, became tiresome to a few. Others did not fully understand Evan's suicide. But in the end, *The Inhabited World* is worth reading for its musings on life, death, and faith in redemption.

This is an excerpt from a review published in Bookmarks magazine.

Toni says

I would of never picked this book to read on my own. It was suggested to me by Jan Priddy. I was between library books and thought I should of give it a try. A good read for me in that I finished it. So many books these days do not hold my attention. I think its me not them.

I won't say anything about the plot because it would detract from reading it.

Ruby says

The back jacket of this book calls David Long "a writer's writer." Spoken by a writer, this is a compliment, though I see it as a backhanded one. Translation: he doesn't make any money. How many writers are there out there to read each others' books? If all you are is a writer's writer, you're sunk.

What can we hope to learn from a character who is already dead? How can this character grow, change, evolve? These are questions I would have asked had I heard about this book before reading it. Lucky for me, I didn't.

As the ghost of Evan Molloy putters around the house in which he died, he shows us the intimate lives of the living strangers who now occupy the house, while recounting his own history. Juxtaposed, these tales pry

apart the mysteries of human action, especially our own actions.

This is a new take on purgatory, one that shakes off punishment and leaves only the experience of life, its game of influence and impotence, as teacher.

Martha says

The book begins with the narrator awakening in his house and discovering he has committed suicide. Over time he continues to live in his former house (mainly because he can't leave it) and to watch subsequent owners come and go. Meanwhile, he tries to reconstruct the circumstances of his suicide by a self-inflicted gunshot wound, as his memory as to exactly how and what happened was mostly erased after his death. Thought-provoking and actually hopeful, I enjoyed the theme of this book. The only downside would be the "I live in Seattle" passages, which I find tiresome, since I live in Seattle, too.

Mary says

LibraryThing.com review

"Mine was a surmountable despair. I just didn't. Surmount it." You feel the joy of language the delight of using a word like surmount, the small quiet thrill of that heart stopping hesitation. Death like life is still a time for learning and self discovery for Evan. His redemption is found when he finds the answers to a life ill spent and he imparts some of that knowledge to the lost woman who shares his home. — review by user vickiphdc

I like this review because it captures the thoughtful language and harrowing depression that leads the narrator, a ghost now 10 years dead, to watch and worry over the current inhabitant of his house, a young woman in a troubled affair with a doctor. This book stayed with me.

Betsy Tsukada says

This was a really gripping book for me. At the same time, I don't think I could recommend it to anyone because of the delicate nature of the subject matter. As I got further and further into it, I could see where it was headed but I was so compelled by the book that I couldn't stop myself from finishing it. I guess I can't say more without giving the whole plot away. It will stay with me in my mind for a while. Not necessarily in a good way.

Kenneth says

Evan killed himself with a gun, and now finds himself a ghost, apparently doomed to wander eternally, and undetected by humans, through his old house. He is not particularly bored, though he is at times frustrated that none of the house's subsequent inhabitants sense his presence. Most of the book is Evan looking back on his life and his downward slide through depression to suicide. The book ends on a happy note, with Evan rejoicing in the self-affirming decision made by the woman now in the house.

Denis S says

I stumbled across this book a few years ago, wandering a bookstore uninspired by anything, finally grabbing this book nearly at random. A few hours later I was immersed in the unique premise, the thought-provoking storyline and the incredible writing. And the main character, Evan Molloy, who could have been any one of a number of friends I've known along the way.

This isn't a self-help book disguised as a novel (though I do wish anyone considering suicide would first read it) or a judgment or statement about taking one's life. And it certainly isn't a sappy story though, of course, suicide is about as sad as it gets. Instead it is about the considerations and reflections of a man, a spirit, who seemingly had everything to live for yet, in a moment of desperation, brought about his own conclusion. And in so doing, brought about so much confusion and pain for those who loved him.

The story takes place in Ballard, a Seattle neighborhood so familiar to me personally that the story draws me even closer. I know these streets and have lived in similar housing tucked in neat rows below a mostly gray sky.

This isn't just a story about a death act or its aftermath, or the cognizance and understanding (the "why"). It's also about the struggle of a spirit ultimately finding an escape from the unimaginable loneliness of invisibility and aloneness in order to move to the next, the final, place along his journey.

Excellent, unforgettable book. Gorgeously written. One of my absolute favorite novels.

Beth says

This was set in Seattle-- interesting but a little self conscious about it. It gave a realistic account of depression-- the banality more than the desperation-- and the tiresomeness of it for other people. I wonder how the library book group will like this? I'm not sure they wanted to read about depression and suicide. (Why can't I find happy, funny books in the book group collection. I guess they don't make for intense discussion.)

Denali says

An interesting way to tell a story but ultimately slight.