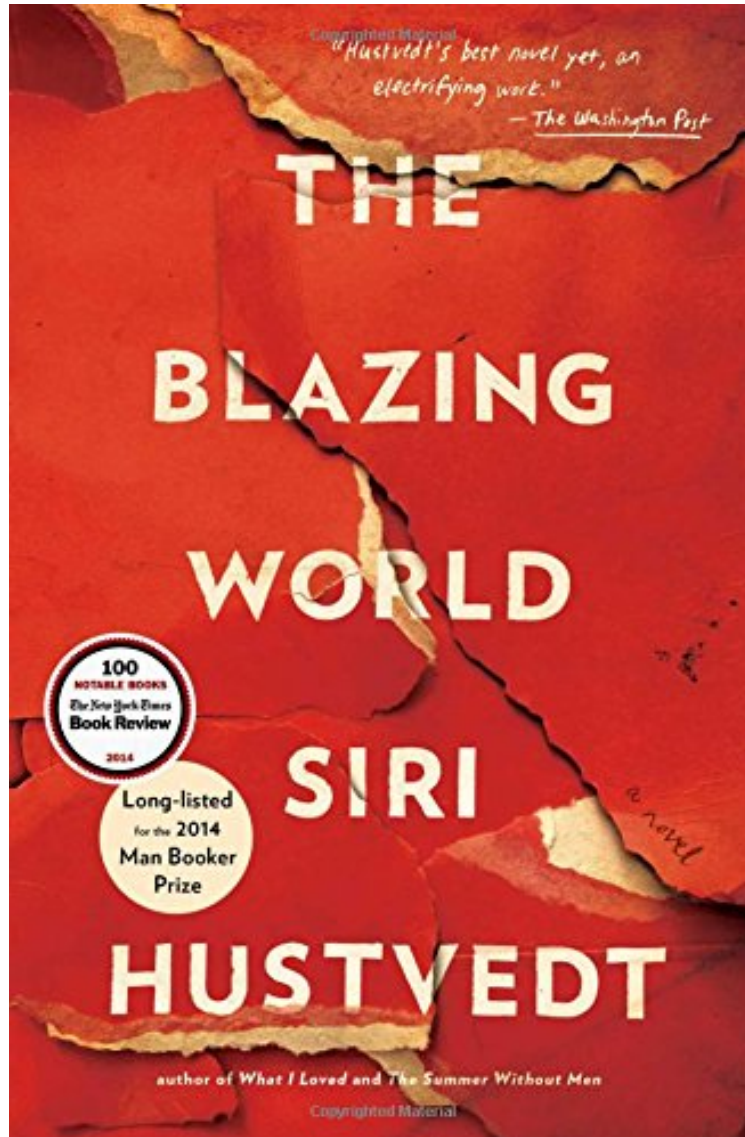


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## The Blazing World: A Novel

*Siri Hustvedt*

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**Siri Hustvedt : The Blazing World: A Novel** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Blazing World: A Novel:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Want to read something worthy of your time and attention? Read it. By Susan K. Gushue Hard to read. I needed to take a couple of hours between the different entries to reflect on them. I think this is one of the most insightful books of the 21st century. Worth the attention it demands. It would be great to pair this with Middlesex for a conversation about identity and gender. After reading several of the other reviews of this

book I felt compelled to write mine. This novel doesn't require you to know everything that we are led to believe Harriet Burden knows it just takes you into a world where thinking about things is a passion. I did care about Harriet. I cared about many of the characters. They were complex people who could not be pinned down. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Beautifully crafted By Kristofer Larsen I believe I can see the free-spirited marriage or coalition between Hustvedt and Paul Auster shine through many of these pages. At least that's how I perceive them after reading most of Paul Auster's latest novels. With that being said, the story itself should be an eyeopener for us males who must realize how male privilege shapes our society. The passage where she describes the planes crashing on that day in September some years ago is haunting and is close to McCarthy in description, pace and prose. Instant goosebumps, feeling of nausea, and a reliving of our own experience from those days. Also being able to tie in her knowledge of neuroscience which she truly has a lot of knowledge of. The omniscience is subtle, but ever so present. 3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Blazing Trails By Katherine Mackenzie Siri Hustvedt's newest (and my first) is a modern classic. You don't have to be a woman, or an artist, to enjoy *The Blazing World*. The synopsis adequately shares what it's generally about, but each reader will be sure to take away something different that doesn't directly pertain to being a female in the art world. Sure, that statement is coming from a woman who went to art school, but while reading about Harry's artistic life through letters and interviews I could more relate to my explorations in personal identity than perhaps the more obvious outward experience of being a female art maker (Not that those things are completely polarized though). Harry's identity is a long battle of sorts, one that is both beautiful and heartbreaking to read about, and only made more complicated by the fact that the majority of these experiences are really other people's perceptions of her, juxtaposed with her private journals which share a manic (and somewhat pugnacious) insight into her world. I actually found myself drawn less to her writing than the written judgement of others. Perhaps because identity in part is how others perceive you, and in turn, judge and categorize you in whatever plane you're trying to thrive. Harry's passion was endearing and relatable, but frustrating at times and suffered a bit in its repetition. This is a thought provoking and candid exposure of a woman's career, and her attempt to share herself and actually be seen through the mask she dons and relates to others. To put it simply. It's an obvious thought to relate this work directly to the author herself, but Hustvedt seems to invite this by including her own name in the journals of Harry at one point. Perhaps a humorous Easter egg written in expectation of probing comparisons. I loved reading this moment, it perked me up while I was sinking into the whole calamity of Harry's posthumously discovered art and philosophies. So, shout out to that lovely moment! I'm excited to further explore more of Siri Hustvedt's ideas and writing. I've read some good stuff this year for the Man Booker 2014, and *The Blazing World* is a worthy contender I'll certainly be rooting for. Highly Recommended.

Named one of the New York Times Book Review's 100 Notable Books of the Year \*\* Publishers Weekly's Best Fiction Books of 2014 \*\* NPR Best Books of 2014 \*\* Kirkus Reviews Best Literary Fiction Books of 2014 \*\* Washington Post Top 50 Fiction Books of 2014 \*\* Boston Globe's Best Fiction of 2014 \*\* The Telegraph's Best Fiction to Read 2014 \*\* St. Louis Post Dispatch's Best Books of 2014 \*\* The Independent Fiction Books of the Year 2014 \*\* One of BuzzFeed's Best Books Written by Women in 2014 \*\* San Francisco Chronicle's Best of 2014 \*\* A Nancy Pearl Pick \*\* PopMatters.com's Best of 2014 Fiction Winner of the 2014 LA Times Book Prize for Fiction Finalist for the 2014 Kirkus Prize Hailed by The Washington Post as "Siri Hustvedt's best novel yet, an electrifying work," *The Blazing World* is a masterful novel about perception, prejudice, desire, and one woman's struggle to be seen. In a new novel called "searingly fresh... A Nabokovian cat's cradle" on the cover of The New York Times Book Review, the internationally bestselling author tells the provocative story of artist Harriet Burden, who, after years of having her work ignored, ignites an explosive scandal in New York's art world when she recruits three young men to present her creations as their own. Yet when the shows succeed and Burden steps forward for her triumphant reveal, she is betrayed by the third man, Rune. Many critics side with him, and Burden and Rune find themselves in a charged and dangerous game, one that ends in his bizarre death. An intricately conceived, diabolical puzzle presented as a collection of texts, including Harriet's journals, assembled after her death, this "glorious mashup of storytelling and scholarship" (San Francisco Chronicle) unfolds from multiple perspectives as Harriet's critics, fans, family, and others offer their own conflicting opinions of where the truth lies. Writing in Slate, Katie Roiphe declared it "a spectacularly good read...feminism in the tradition of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* or Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*: richly complex, densely psychological, dazzlingly nuanced." "Astonishing, harrowing, and utterly, completely engrossing" (NPR), Hustvedt's new novel is "Blazing indeed:...with agonizing compassion for all of wounded humanity" (Kirkus Reviews, starred review). It is a masterpiece that will be remembered for years to come.

From Booklist \*Starred \* Hustvedt's (*Living, Thinking, Looking*, 2012) fascination with art and artists, a prime subject in her fiction and essays, propels her sixth novel through a labyrinth of masquerade and betrayal to profoundly unsettling truths. I. V. Hess is the editor of this purported collection of writings by and about an enigmatic artist, Harriet Burden, the tall, strong, erudite widow of a famous and secretive art dealer. Long enraged over the dismissive response to her work, Harriet launches a high-stakes gambit to expose the art world's persistent sexism. She convinces

three male artists to pose as the creators of a sequence of her elaborate, allusive, and wildly provocative installations. We observe Harriet, her intellectually astute and psychologically daring art, and her risky quest for validation and justice from multiple, often contradictory perspectives through entries from Harriet's journals, art reviews, and interviews with and written statements by various experts, including, oddly enough, a woman who reads auras, as well as Harriet's daughter and son, lifelong friend, lover, and artist-accomplices, trustworthy and vile. Hustvedt subtly explores the intricate workings of the brain and the mysteries of the mind as she shrewdly investigates gender differences, parodies art criticism, and contrasts diabolical ambition and the soul-scouring inquiries of expressive art. A heady, suspenseful, funny, and wrenching novel of creativity, identity, and longing. --Donna Seaman

**LONGLISTED FOR THE MAN BOOKER PRIZE** "The Blazing World offers a spirited romp...constructed as a Nabokovian cat's cradle....Hustvedt's portrait of the artist as a middle-aged widow is searingly fresh. It's rare to encounter a female protagonist who throws her weight around quite so grandiloquently as Harriet Burden, a heroine who is—well, more like the hero of a Philip Roth or a Saul Bellow novel." (New York Times Book ) "Ingeniously and energetically put together. . . . The Blazing World never runs out of steam in dispensing ideas and peeling back layers of truth." (Chicago Tribune) "The Blazing World is Siri Hustvedt's best novel yet, an electrifying work with a titanic, poignantly flawed protagonist. Harriet Burden's rage, turbulence and neediness leap off these pages in a skillfully orchestrated chorus of voices both dark and brilliant." (The Washington Post) "Incandescent. . . . Hustvedt's greatest triumph here is not the feminist argument she makes. It's that we ache for her characters. This is a muscular book, and just enough of that muscle is heart." (The Boston Globe) "A glorious mashup of storytelling and scholarship. . . . [The Blazing World's] touching conclusion 'blazes hot and bright' from the perspective of an aura reader, Harriet's caretaker, whose vision of the artist's work is at once spiritually charged and whimsical." (The San Francisco Chronicle) "In certain respects, The Blazing World is a didactic novel, presenting arguments about the place of gender in American cultural life, yet it avoids preaching or settled judgments by putting at its center a figure whose strongly held beliefs are undermined by the hazards of real life. The effect is more fluid and nuanced than any scholarly study or political diatribe could be." (The Wall Street Journal) "The Blazing World is unique and recognizably so, a bracing examination of the act of creation, of fame and identity, gender bias and feminism, love and desire, psychology and philosophy. . . . Full of life and ideas and intellectual prowess, it's also a compelling story with richly drawn characters. . . . [An] extraordinary puzzle." (The Miami Herald) "Complex, astonishing, harrowing, and utterly, completely engrossing." (NPR) "This is feminism in the tradition of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, or Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*: richly complex, densely psychological, dazzlingly nuanced. And at the same time, the book is a spectacularly good read. Its storytelling is magnificent, its characters vivid, its plot gripping; it's rare that a novel of ideas can be so much fun." (Slate) "Siri Hustvedt has earned her reputation as a brilliant thinker and articulate writer. This is not her first work of fiction, and *The Blazing World* is strong proof that her talents are unmatched in the genre. . . a delightful, quirky story that shares many truths about women in the arts, and the struggles they encounter in rising to fame." (Seattle Post-Intelligencer) "Dazzling. . . ingeniously constructed. . . . The Blazing World is a serious, sometimes profound book, tackling head-on the knotty issues of identity and sense of self, and our unconscious ideas about gender and celebrity. It offers an exhilarating reading experience for anyone willing to meet its challenge." (Pittsburgh Post-Gazette) "Siri Hustvedt has a rare gift for finding the human heart in what might be cerebral musings and rarefied settings." (Columbus Dispatch) "Immediately engrossing. . . . None of the narrators, even Harriet, are precisely reliable, and this ingeniously supports Harriet's own theory that we are all just monsters wearing masks." (San Antonio Current) "The absence of women artists in the history of painting is an old feminist topic, but it is one *The Blazing World* approaches head-on." (The Guardian) "Hustvedt's novels – *What I Loved*, *The Enchantment of Lily Dahl*, *The Summer Without Men*, among others – have always been smart, accomplished, critically acclaimed but this one feels like a departure. There is more heat in it, more wildness; it seems to burst on to a whole other level of achievement and grace." (Financial Times) "Densely brilliant, but terrifyingly clever too... you don't need a PhD in Kierkegaard to enjoy Hustvedt's writing, and it's a pleasure to feel your brain whirring as it forges links and finds the cracks across differing accounts. Even if *The Blazing World* is about ambiguity and mutability in everything from authorship to gender to memory, Hustvedt's text is carefully, impressively constructed: she's as convincing in each fictional voice as Harriet is in her masks." (The Independent) "An exuberantly clever piece of work.... [A] novel that gloriously lives up to its title, one blazing with energy and thought." (The Times) "Masterful. . . . [Hustvedt's] long-running explorations have rarely been merged together as fluidly as they are here, an achievement that has everything to do with rendering the novel's abundant intellect in a deeply felt and accessible manner. Six novels and more than two decades into her career, it is altogether fair to argue that Siri Hustvedt is quietly becoming one of North America's most subversive and fearlessly intelligent writers." (Toronto Star) "Both intellectually and emotionally gripping... the generosity of the storytelling leads to full and often affecting backstories for all the main characters... [it] feels like one of those novels in which a well-established author triumphantly sums up, and possibly even surpasses, everything they've done before." (The Spectator) "The Blazing World is poundingly alive with ideas, personalities, conviction, fear, fakery, ambition, and sorrow. The reading mind is set on high, happy alert." (The New York Journal of Books) "A heady, suspenseful, funny, and wrenching novel of creativity, identity, and longing."

(Booklist (Starred ))“Larger-than-life Harry reads vociferously, loves fervently, and overflows with intellectual and creative energy....Hustvedt dissects the art world with ironic insight....This is a funny, sad, through-provoking, and touching portrait of a woman who is blazing with postfeminist fury and propelled by artistic audacity.” (Publishers Weekly)“Readers of Hustvedt’s essay collections (Living, Thinking, Looking, 2012, etc.) will recognize the writer’s long-standing interest in questions of perception, and her searching intellect is also evident here. But as the story of Harry’s life coheres . . . it’s the emotional content that seizes the reader . . . As in her previous masterpiece, What I Loved (2003), Hustvedt paints a scathing portrait of the art world, obsessed with money and the latest trend, but superb descriptions of Harry’s work—installations expressing her turbulence and neediness—remind us that the beauty and power of art transcend such trivialities . . . Blazing indeed: not just with Harry’s fury, but with agonizing compassion for all of wounded humanity.” (Kirkus s (Starred ))“Intelligent and . . . knowledgeable about the world of modern art, theory, and philosophy, Hustvedt describes in detail the insular world of the New York City art scene.” (Library )About the AuthorSiri Hustvedt was born in 1955 in Northfield, Minnesota. She has a PhD from Columbia University in English literature and is the internationally acclaimed author of six novels: *The Blazing World*, *The Sorrows of an American*, *What I Loved*, *The Enchantment of Lily Dahl*, *Blindfold*, and *The Summer Without Men*, as well as a growing body of nonfiction including, *A Plea for Eros* and *Mysteries of the Rectangle*, and an interdisciplinary investigation of the body and mind in *The Shaking Woman or A History of My Nerves*. She has given lectures on artists and theories of art at the Prado, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich. She lives in Brooklyn with her husband, the novelist Paul Auster.