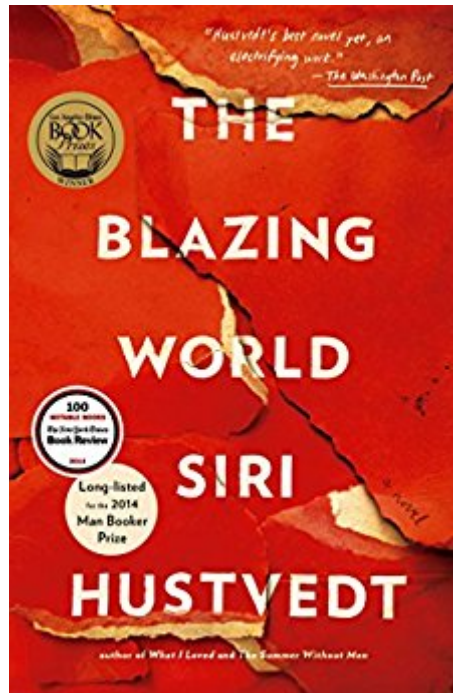




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# The Blazing World: A Novel



## Synopsis

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.

## Book Information

File Size: 2159 KB

Print Length: 369 pages

Publisher: Simon & Schuster; Reprint edition (March 11, 2014)

Publication Date: March 11, 2014

Sold by:Â Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B00DPM7TB8

Text-to-Speech: Not enabled

X-Ray: Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #4,098 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #6 inÂ Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Literature & Fiction > Literary Fiction > Satire #7 inÂ Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Humor & Entertainment > Humor > Satire #11 inÂ Books > Humor & Entertainment > Humor > Self-Help & Psychology

## Customer Reviews

This is the first book I have read on the booker prize longlist. I can completely understand why it was nominated. It is extremely cover and should only be read by those who enjoy a certain amount of complexity in the books that they read. It follows the strange tale of the fictional author Harriet Burden and is written like an investigative journalist piece. The question central to the book is about perception. Harriet is this large, older woman who is a largely unnoticed artist who chooses to use three young male artists a fronts for her art work and these pieces are an immediate success. Why have there been so few famous artists? Harriet plays with being Harry, Richard and wears many other male masks. Her desperate need for recognition which she feels would have come naturally as a male is tangible and believable. I found it a fascinating and original book. The question of perception and what does I really mean will no doubt keep coming back to me. This is a book that stays with you. Well done Siri Hustvedt.

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.

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.

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.

Another great novel from Siri Hustvedt. I was enthralled by "The Things I Loved" but this one is even better. The story, told by numerous voices, among them, Harriet Burden's, the protagonist, is a feminists' nightmare. She is a serious artist whose work is ignored and disparaged because she is a woman. Harriet's rage begins to poison her life and her revenge is anything but sweet. There's a cast of characters from the New York world of Modern Art, some of them portrayed with sly humor. There are loving friends and family as well, making Harriet's life and her art a work to be admired. I loved this book. It is everything a novel should be,

I am still reading, compulsively reading. I love the complexity of the characters, the flow of challenging ideas, the mystery of it all. I want to know these people. Hustvedt has such compassion for all of her imagined people no matter how flawed. She embraces the "strange" and transforms. The format of interviews, articles, journal entries keeps the pages turning. This is definitely one of my "books of the year" and I intend to pass it on and gift it to friends.

Engrossing tale of the artworld. Explores identity and gender roles specifically how women are often sidelined as cultural producers and money, gender, race and age can make a difference as to who gets seen and who gets completely forgotten. It may sound dry but it is not! Weird and wonderful

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