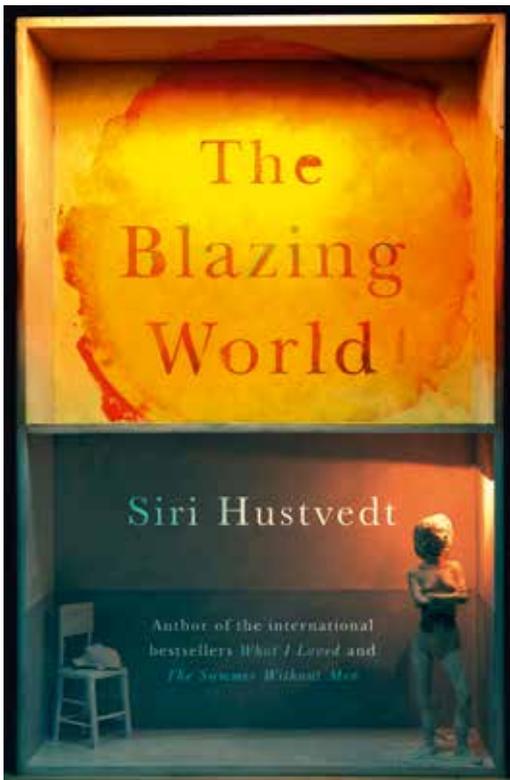


The Man
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2014

Reader's Guide



Other novels by Siri Hustvedt

The Blindfold (1993)

The Enchantment of Lily Dahl (1996)

What I Loved (2003)

The Sorrows of an American (2008)

The Summer Without Men (2011)

The Blazing World

Siri Hustvedt

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About the author

Siri Hustvedt lives in Brooklyn, New York. Born in Minnesota, she has a PhD in English from Columbia University and in 2012 was awarded the International Gabarron Prize for Thought and Humanities.

The Blazing World

Artist Harriet Burden, consumed by fury at the lack of recognition she has received from the New York art establishment, embarks on an experiment: she hides her identity behind three male fronts who exhibit her work as their own. And yet, even after she has unmasked herself, there are those who refuse to believe she is the woman behind the men.

Presented as a collection of texts compiled by a scholar years after Burden's death, the story unfolds through extracts from her notebooks, reviews and articles, as well as testimonies from her children, her lover, a dear friend, and others more distantly connected to her. Each account is different, however, and the mysteries multiply.

Discussion points

The Blazing World includes an editor's footnotes to document Harriet Burden's many literary, philosophical, and scientific references. What role do these notes play in relation to Harry's notebooks and to the novel as a whole?

The Blazing World is a work of fiction, but it is presented as a scholarly compilation. Why do you think the author chose to write the story in this form?

Harriet Burden is a powerful female character, motivated, not by love, but by ambition for her work. Writing under a pseudonym, Richard Brickman, Harry claims that her male masks help her as an artist to live out "a liberating duplicity and ambiguity" and elaborate "a hermaphroditic self," a self that is part male and part female. Is this a feminist position in a feminist book or is it something else?

How does the novel's multi-voiced, fragmentary style reflect the problem of perception Harry claims she is exploring in her experiment?

Sweet Autumn Pinkney is a minor character in the novel. Why does she have the last word? Is there something she seems to understand about Harry and her work that the others don't?

Themed reading

Jane Harris *Gillespie and I*
Tom McCarthy *Men in Space*
Virginia Woolf *To the Lighthouse*

Useful links

www.themanbookerprize.com
www.sirihustvedt.net
www.hodder.co.uk